



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

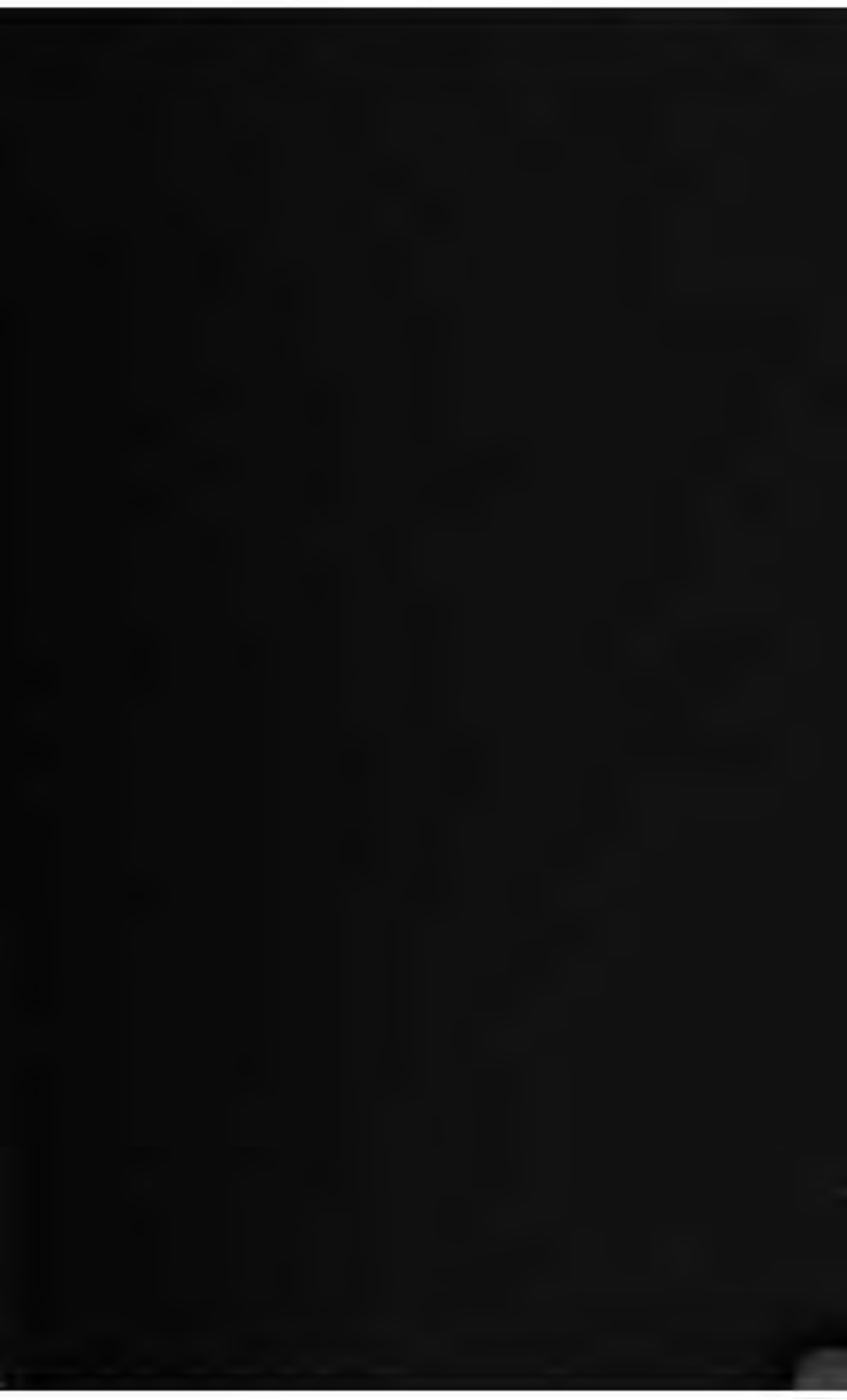
We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>





96

THE
PUBLIC
ABDOR, LENO
HIGLIA PO



Yours sincerely
Harry T. Hignett

ANNUAL LAW CONFERENCES

1906-7

Report of the Central Association of Law
Conferences, held from May, 1906 to February,
1907, with the Papers read and the conclusions
of the Report of the Central Committee.

THE

P. S. PINGREE, SEN.

CHIEF OF THE CENTRAL ASSOCIATION OF LAW

CONFERENCE

10/10/10

POOR LAW CONFERENCES

HELD IN THE YEAR

1906-7

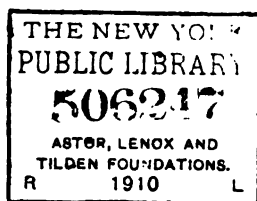
**Proceedings of the Central and District Poor Law
Conferences, held from May 1906 to February
1907, with the Papers read and discussion thereon,
and Report of the Central Committee**

London

P. S. KING & SON

ORCHARD HOUSE, WESTMINSTER

1907
E. R. G.



CONTENTS.

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS.

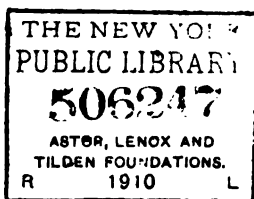
ADMINISTRATION—

PAGE

ERRATA.

- Page 484, line 17 from bottom, for *fifteen applications were made for admission*, read *one lad of fifteen made application for admission*.
 Page 528, line 8 from bottom, for *Hunslet Workhouse*, read *various Workhouses*.
 Page 536, BRADFELD UNION, for *J. Sousley*, read *J. Lousley*; and for *H. G. Willink (Chairman)*, read *H. G. Willink (Ex-Chairman)*.
 Page 621, line 13 from top, for *Mr Sousley*, read *Mr Lousley*.

IN DENMARK. By Mrs G. H. Edwards, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i> - - - - -	627
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY—	
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE. By Mr E. A. Rigby, <i>Clerk, Huddersfield Union</i> - - -	509
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Mr Samuel Adams, <i>Clerk, Auckland Union</i> -	158
—— By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Member of the Departmental Committee; Hon. Sec., Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences</i> - - - - -	31
—— By Colonel E. Clayton, <i>Guardian, Bath Union</i> -	445
—— By Mr Chas. W. Dean, <i>Clerk, Ulverston Union</i> -	703
—— By Mr Fred. W. Mee, <i>Clerk, Hunslet Union</i> -	374



CONTENTS.

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO SUBJECTS.

	PAGE
ADMINISTRATION—	
INCREASING BURDEN ON THE POOR RATE IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION. By Mr R. A. Leach, <i>Clerk, Rochdale Union</i> - - -	278
— By Rev. L. R. Phelps, <i>Vice-Chairman, Oxford Incorporation</i> - - -	414
— By Mr F. Underhill, <i>Guardian, Plymouth Incorporation</i> - - -	405
BLIND—THE CARE OF THE BLIND POOR. By Mr W. H. Tate, <i>Member, Committee of the Bradford Institution for the Blind</i> -	486
CENTRAL COMMITTEE, REPORT OF THE - - -	684
CHILDREN—	
MAINTENANCE OF PARENTS BY THEIR CHILDREN. By Mr Charles A. Jones, <i>Guardian, Carnarvon Union</i> - -	230
UNDERFED SCHOOL CHILDREN. By Professor Millicent Mackenzie, <i>University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire</i> - - -	78
CONTRACTS—GUARDIANS' CONTRACT BUSINESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RATES. By Colonel Gerard Clark, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i> - - -	731
DANISH POOR LAW—FIFTEEN YEARS OF POOR LAW REFORM IN DENMARK. By Mrs G. H. Edwards, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i> - - -	627
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY—	
RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE. By Mr E. A. Rigby, <i>Clerk, Huddersfield Union</i> - -	509
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Mr Samuel Adams, <i>Clerk, Auckland Union</i> -	158
— By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Member of the Departmental Committee; Hon. Sec., Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences</i> - - -	31
— By Colonel E. Clayton, <i>Guardian, Bath Union</i> -	445
— By Mr Chas. W. Dean, <i>Clerk, Ulverston Union</i> -	703
— By Mr Fred. W. Mee, <i>Clerk, Hunslet Union</i> -	374

	PAGE	
VAGRANCY—continued.		
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY.		
By Colonel E. Clayton, <i>Guardian, Bath Union</i> - -	445	
By Mr Chas. W. Dean, <i>Clerk, Ulverston Union</i> - -	703	
By Mr F. W. Mee, <i>Clerk, Hunslet Union</i> - -	374	
By Mr E. J. Mott, <i>Clerk, Parish of Fulham</i> - -	546	
By Mr Thomas Palmer, <i>Guardian, Parish of Notting-</i> <i>ham</i> - - - - -	361	
By Mr A. F. Vulliamy, <i>late Clerk, Parish of Ipswich</i> - -	649	
By Right Hon. J. L. Wharton, <i>Chairman of the late</i> <i>Departmental Committee on Vagrancy</i> - - - -	695	
By Mr H. G. Willink, <i>ex-Chairman, Bradfield Board</i> <i>of Guardians</i> - - - - -	561	
TREATMENT OF VAGRANTS. By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Member of the late Departmental Committee on Vagrancy</i>	290	
WORKHOUSES—		
DETENTION OF WOMEN, AND THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN OUR WORKHOUSES. By Miss Helen Newill, <i>Guardian, King's Norton Union</i> - - -		8
TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF RESCUE WORK. By Miss Edith Champneys, <i>Guardian, Conway Union</i> -		212
YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES. By Miss Mary Clifford, <i>Guardian, Parish of Bristol</i> - - - -	434	

CONTENTS.

ARRANGED ACCORDING TO DISTRICTS.

CENTRAL—FEBRUARY 1907.

	PAGE
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY.	
By Rt. Hon. J. L. Wharton, <i>Chairman of the Departmental</i> <i>Committee on Vagrancy</i> - - - -	695
— By Mr Charles W. Dean, <i>Clerk, Ulverston Union</i> - -	703
THE INCREASING BURDEN OF POOR RELIEF. By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Hon. Secretary, Central Committee of Poor Law</i> <i>Conferences</i> - - - - -	724
GUARDIANS' CONTRACT BUSINESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RATES. By Colonel Gerard Clark, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i>	731
THE NURSING OF THE OUTDOOR POOR AND THE ADMINISTRA- TION OF THE MIDWIVES ACT IN RURAL DISTRICTS. By Mrs Charles Hobhouse, <i>Hon. Sec., Wilts. County Nursing Association</i>	750

CONTENTS.

vii

PAGE

NORTHERN—JULY 1906.

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN ACT, 1905. By Rev. G. Algernon West, <i>Vice-Chairman, Sunderland Distress Committee</i>	-	124
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Mr Samuel Adams, <i>Clerk, Auckland Union</i>	-	158

NORTH MIDLAND—OCTOBER 1906.

OUTDOOR RELIEF. By Mrs Ramsay, <i>Guardian, Fareham Union</i>	-	316
—— By Mr Allan Dearden, <i>Superintendent of Out-Relief, Ecclesall Bierlow Union</i>	- - - - -	338
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY. By Mr Thomas Palmer, <i>Guardian, Parish of Nottingham</i>	-	361
—— By Mr Fred. W. Mee, <i>Clerk, Hunslet Union</i>	- -	374

NORTH WALES—SEPTEMBER 1906.

OUTDOOR RELIEF, INCLUDING MEDICAL ATTENDANCE. By Rev. A. R. Alsop, <i>Guardian, Cannock Union</i>	- - -	195
THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF RESCUE WORK. By Miss Edith Champneys, <i>Guardian, Conway Union</i>	- - -	212
MAINTENANCE OF PARENTS BY THEIR CHILDREN. By Mr Charles A. Jones, <i>Guardian, Carnarvon Union</i>	- -	230

NORTH-WESTERN—SEPTEMBER 1906.

INFANTILE MORTALITY. By Dr J. Milson Rhodes, <i>Chairman, Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences</i>	- - -	252
THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE POOR RATE IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION. By Mr R. A. Leach, <i>Clerk, Rochdale Union</i>	- - - - -	278
THE TREATMENT OF VAGRANTS. By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Member of the late Departmental Committee on Vagrancy</i>	-	290

SOUTH-EASTERN—NOVEMBER 1906.

THE VAGRANT. By Mr E. J. Mott, <i>Clerk, Parish of Fulham</i>	-	546
—— By Mr H. G. Willink, <i>Ex-Chairman, Bradfield Board of Guardians</i>	- - - - -	561
MEDICAL OUTDOOR RELIEF. By Mr Morton Latham, <i>Chairman, Farnham Board of Guardians</i>	- - - - -	595
NURSING OF THE OUTDOOR POOR. By Miss Amy Hughes, <i>General Superintendent, Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses</i>	- - - - -	605

SOUTH MIDLAND—DECEMBER 1906.

FIFTEEN YEARS OF POOR LAW REFORM IN DENMARK. By Mrs G. H. Edwards, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i> - - -	627
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Mr A. F. VULLIAMY, <i>late Clerk, Parish of Ipswich</i>	649

SOUTH WALES—JUNE 1906.

UNDERFED SCHOOL CHILDREN. By Professor Millicent Mackenzie, <i>University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire</i>	78
THE UNEMPLOYED. By Mr James Manning, <i>Guardian, Bedwellty Union</i> - - - - -	97

SOUTH-WESTERN—OCTOBER 1906.

THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE RATEPAYERS IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION. By Mr F. Underhill, <i>Guardian, Plymouth Incorporation</i> - - -	405
— By Rev. L. R. Phelps, <i>Vice-Chairman, Oxford Incorporation</i>	414
YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES. By Miss Mary Clifford, <i>Guardian, Parish of Bristol</i> - - - - -	434
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Colonel E. Clayton, <i>Guardian, Bath Union</i> -	445

WEST MIDLAND—MAY 1906.

DETENTION OF WOMEN, AND THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES. By Miss Helen Newill, <i>Guardian, King's Norton Union</i> - - - - -	8
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY. By Sir William Chance, Bart., <i>Member of the late Departmental Committee on Vagrancy</i> - - - - -	31

YORKSHIRE—NOVEMBER 1906.

A FACTOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF PAUPERISM. By Dr James Allan, <i>Medical Superintendent, Leeds Union Infirmary</i> -	480
CARE OF THE BLIND POOR. By Mr W. H. Tate, <i>Member, Committee of the Institution of the Blind, Bradford</i> - -	486
THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE. By Mr E. A. Rigby, <i>Clerk, Huddersfield Union</i> - - -	509

Harry Alfred Hignett.

It is not improbable that many Guardians who read this brief sketch may not have heard of the name of Canon Hignett, unless they happen to come from the North-Western District, and it is also not improbable that they may be inclined to ask why he has been chosen as the subject of a special memoir in this report. But in every part of the county of Chester, and in many parts of Lancashire, he was known as an earnest and devoted clergyman and as a public spirited man of affairs. One of his chief claims to the latter title is to be found in the valuable work he did as a Poor Law Guardian for just twenty-nine years, and in his services for a like period on the Bucklow Rural District Council and its predecessor the Altrincham Union Rural Sanitary Authority. In both positions he took his full share of duty from the time of his first election to the very last, and it is no exaggeration to say that no member more completely commanded the respect and confidence of his colleagues than did Canon Hignett. He was essentially a worker. So far as we know, he did not take a prominent part at the many Conferences he attended, but no one had a better knowledge of the administration of the Poor Law, and in any difficulty which presented itself he was always ready to meet it with his ripe experience and good judgment and sound common-sense. Possessing as he did a very high and dignified sense of duty he never feared to take what he considered the right and proper course, and in doing this he was always ready to give the fullest proof of the earnestness of his convictions, and the perfect

sincerity of his motives. He was always willing to respect the opinions of those who differed from him on any point, and would never let a harsh or unkind word pass his lips, or allow any difference of opinion to interrupt friendship. Without doubt it was this sound and wholesome quality which was one of the principal causes of his popularity in public life, quite apart from the influence exerted by a gentleness of manner, which was closely "allied to his easy dignity of carriage and his kindly and unaffected bearing," proving himself at all times to be a splendid type of the true English gentleman.

Harry Alfred Hignett was the eldest son of John Hignett, Solicitor, of Chester, his mother being the eldest daughter of Dr Bagnall of Chester, who for many years was one of the leading physicians in the County. He was born on 7th May 1839 at Heronbridge, a picturesque residence on the River Dee, a short distance below Eccleston Ferry, in the parish of St Mary's, Chester, and here the first eight or ten years of his life were spent. Principally for the purpose of obtaining greater educational advantages the family then moved into the city, and young Hignett was sent to a large private school conducted by the Rev. W. Harrison, vicar of St Oswald's, a ripe scholar and cultured gentleman of the old school. Until he was sixteen years of age he remained here. Afterwards his studies were continued with private tutors, one of them being a son of the Bishop of Lichfield, the Rev. J. G. Lonsdale. In 1858 he went up to Oriel College, Oxford. At the University he was well known on the river, rowing each year in his college boat. He took his Bachelor of Arts in 1861, proceeding three years later to the degree of Master of Arts. In 1862 he was ordained by Bishop Graham at Chester, and was licensed to the curacy of Rostherne, Cheshire. On the resignation of his Vicar he was placed in charge of Bollington, where he worked for a few months, and

afterwards, at the request of the Vicar of Bowdon, he undertook fresh work at the neighbouring church of Ashley. In the year 1864 he was offered by the late Lord Egerton of Tatton and accepted the living of Ringway, where he laboured faithfully until his death last year, and where he was justly beloved and honoured. In this little Parish his work has been fruitful of good result, which will long remain, and it will be many years before his name is forgotten or his memory cease to be cherished with true and deep affection. Though many offers of preferment were made to him by (amongst others) each of the three bishops who have followed Dr Graham, yet he was content to labour for the spiritual welfare of the people whom he loved so dearly, and who so dearly loved him.

In 1887 he was appointed Rural Dean of Bowdon by Bishop Stubbs,—an appointment which he resigned not many months before his death; and in 1893 his sterling worth received its reward when he was made, by the present Bishop, an Honorary Canon of the Cathedral of his native city.

In 1865 he married Constance, daughter of Mr T. H. Whipham, of Strand House, Chiswick. They were indeed a like-minded husband and wife, and it would be hard to say which of them worked most unweariedly for the good of others. To the great grief of all who knew her, and to the irreparable loss of her husband—a loss from which he never really recovered—Mrs Hignett died in 1901.

Education found a warm friend in Canon Hignett, and on most of the Diocesan Committees his name was to be found. He also acted as Chairman of the Bowdon Day Schools Association,—a society which has rendered most valuable assistance to necessitous public elementary schools in the Rural Deanery. Another position he held was that of Chairman of the Rural Deanery Sunday School Union, presiding over the Conferences with marked courtesy and ability, which

endeared him to all. He possessed the happy knack of being able quickly to sum up the points of a debate, to present a clear view of a long discussion in terse and telling language, and very seldom did he fail to reconcile what appeared to be hopelessly wide and strong differences of opinion. To all the Clergy of the Deanery he was united by the strongest ties of friendship, and in all he had to say at the Ruridecanal conferences no one was listened to with greater respect. He never shrunk from a vigorous expression of his own views, but his case was always presented with such breadth of view and ripeness of judgment that almost unconsciously his hearers found themselves to agree with him.

During his Incumbency a mission church was built in an outlying part of his parish, where also new schools were erected. A new parish church, by the munificence of Earl Egerton of Tatton, the patron of the living, took the place of the old dilapidated building.

He was first elected a Guardian of the Poor in 1877, and for just twenty-nine years he took the greatest interest in all questions affecting the administration of the Poor Law, being for several years the "Father of the Board." For seven years, from 1894-1901, he was Chairman of the Board, and for a short time he acted as Chairman of the Rural Sanitary Authority, always filling these important offices in a most admirable manner and in a way that ever commended itself to every member. In addition, he was Vice-Chairman of the Bucklow Rural District Council, and for some years the representative of the County on the Committee of the Central Association of Poor Law Unions. He also acted as Chairman of the School Attendance Committee in connection with the Union, and, when that Committee came to an end by the passing of the Act of 1902, he was appointed a representative of the Bucklow Rural District Council on the Knutsford and Wilmslow Administrative Sub-

Committee, attending the meetings as long as he was able, and from his long experience in educational matters proving a most useful member.

In 1904 his health began to fail, but he still remained at the post of duty, and not very long before his death he was present at one of the meetings of the Board, though his colleagues noticed with deep sorrow how much feebler he had become, and they felt that unless a great change quickly took place they were to lose the services of one with whom they were proud to be associated. He passed peacefully away, surrounded by his family, on Good Friday of last year (13th April) to the universal grief of all who knew him. He was buried on Easter Tuesday (17th April) in the churchyard attached to the church in which he had laboured so long and so faithfully. His funeral was a remarkable sight. The whole parish had, as it were, come to do honour to one who for forty-two years had worked so earnestly for its spiritual well-being. The Clergy of the Rural Deanery, Guardians, District Councillors, as well as Representatives of other public bodies, were there, and a long procession followed the body on its wheeled flower-covered bier as it was drawn to the beautiful church of Ringway. Amid almost universal grief, affection, and respect the dead was laid to rest, and those who attended the service might reflect as they returned home that they had witnessed one of those scenes which, for their simplicity, form no unimportant part in English life.

Our country will indeed be the poorer when there are not such men as Canon Hignett to be found, who are ever seeking to accomplish some good in their day and generation in a spirit which looks for no reward except from their own conscience, and who would only wish to live so long as they might be of some service to others.

But even beyond the confines of his own Union he

was held in the greatest esteem, and many who had been associated with him in Poor Law work felt that they had lost a friend, one with whom it was always a pleasure to work and whose genial presence would be sadly missed, as the following testimonies clearly show. Thus Sir William Chance wrote that the Canon's had been a good, useful life. He was one of that class of Poor Law Administrators who could be ill spared. On behalf of the Committee of the Poor Law Conference he expressed the deep sense of the loss they had sustained. Their beloved and respected colleague was constant in his attendance at the meetings, and they would miss his face very much indeed.

Sir John Hibbert wrote that he deeply sympathised with the Bucklow Board in the great loss they had sustained.

Dr Rhodes, who had been associated with the Canon on Poor Law work for twenty years, also sympathised with the Board in their loss of a true English gentleman. Not only on his own Board, but also on the Central Committee, he did most excellent work.

Certainly we may say that a gap has been created by the death of our dear friend, and a long time must elapse before his place can be filled in the same worthy manner, for he was one who never spared himself either trouble or pains in the conscientious carrying out of his public duties.

J. P. CORT.

West Midland District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

THIRTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE WEST MIDLAND DISTRICT, COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF GLOUCESTER, HEREFORD, SALOP,
STAFFORD, WARWICK, AND WORCESTER, HELD AT
THE IMPERIAL HOTEL, MALVERN, ON THE 2ND AND
3RD MAY 1906.

President—Sir WM. CHANCE, Bart.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference:—

GLOUCESTERSHIRE (16 Unions). BRISTOL— Tyack, E. C. (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>). Kennedy, J. Simpson, J. J. (<i>Clerk</i>). CIRENCESTER— Ovens, T. C. White, G. M. Rawlins, H. St G. Cripps, F. W. B. (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>). GLOUCESTER— Deavin, C. H. THORNBURY— Whitfield, G. (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>). Bruton, C. G. WESTBURY-ON-SEVERN— Constance, William.	WHEATENHURST— Cozens, R. Evans, W. E. Prout, George. Prout, Frank. Baker, Henry. Clifford, Henry. Stuart, R. E. (<i>Clerk</i>). HEREFORDSHIRE (8 Unions). HEREFORD— Ronalds, Hugh (<i>Chairman</i>). ROSS— Curry, Col. C. H. (<i>Chairman</i>). Cooper, F. (<i>Vice-Chairman</i>). Arnold, Fred. WROBLEY— Cotterell, Sir John, Bart. (<i>Chairman</i>). Clowes, Col. P. L.
--	---

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.

SHROPSHIRE (15 Unions).

ATCHAM—

Moriarty, Rev. A.

Everest, Joseph (*Clerk*).

LUDLOW—

Edwards, Henry (*Vice-Chairman*).

STAFFORDSHIRE (16 Unions).

BURTON-ON-TRENT—

Staley, Rev. L. S.

Beard, G.

Benwell, A.

Thompson, F.

CANNOCK—

Alsop, Rev. A. R.

Carver, Mr.

CHEADLE—

Blagg, C. J. (*Chairman*).

SEISDON—

Onslow, W. E.

Hemming, G.

Lakin, J.

TAMWORTH—

Smith, George.

Dewes, John.

WEST BROMWICH—

James, A. A. (*Chairman*).

Piris, Rev. G. F.

Davis, W.

WOLVERHAMPTON—

Pritchard, W. H. (*Chairman*).

Johnson, G. W.

Icke, J.

Harrison, F. (*Clerk*).

WARWICKSHIRE (13 Unions).

ASTON—

Brown, Wm. (*Chairman*).Cook, Charles C. (*Vice-Chairman*).

Williams, T. O.

North, John (*Clerk*).

BIRMINGHAM—

Norton, A. J. (*Chairman*).

Turner, J. R.

Bracey, Mrs E.

Fletcher, Charles.

COVENTRY—

Wilson, George (*Chairman*).

Allen, Miss Edith.

Fennell, Arthur.

Arch, James (*Clerk*).

MERIDEN—

Gilbert, Charles.

Elson, Joseph.

Warmingham, Edward.

Seymour, Arthur.

NUNEATON—

Rayner, A.

RUGBY—

Bradshaw, J.

Cox, J. E.

Loveday, W. G.

Pendred, J. W. (*Clerk*).

STRATFORD-ON-AVON—

Verney, Hon. Mabel.

WARWICK—

Davies, J. H. (*Chairman*).

James, Mrs.

Evans, Mrs Lloyd.

Passum, C. B.

WORCESTERSHIRE (13 Unions).

DUDLEY—

Greaves, John.

Smith, Miss.

Coster, Gaius W. (*Clerk*).

EVESHAM—

Ashwin, James.

KIDDERMINSTER—

Manby, Cordy.

KING'S NORTON—

Francis, Mrs.

Stillwell, Miss E. M.

Walker, Joseph.

Phelps, Gen.

Curtis, R. J. (*Clerk*).

PERSHORE—

Wagstaff, J. W.

Mullany, J.

SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR—

Dodd, Rev. A. G.

Taylor, Arthur.

STOURBRIDGE—

Turner, Mrs L.

William, H.

Hadley, G.

James, G. F. (*Clerk*).

UPTON-ON-SEVERN—

Vernall, William.

Barlow, Miss.

WORCESTER—

Browne, Mrs W.

VISITORS.

Miss B. Walton Evans, Local Government Board Inspector.	Mrs Cripps, Cirencester.
Mr Wethered, Local Government Board.	Mr M. G. Lloyd-Baker, Wheatenhurst.
Mr Dansey, Local Government Board.	Miss K. Lloyd-Baker, Wheatenhurst.
Miss E. O. Browne, Worcester.	Miss C. Lloyd-Baker, Wheatenhurst.
Mr Harben, Worcester.	Mrs Davies, Warwick.
Mrs Harben, Worcester.	Mrs Dewes, Tamworth.
Miss F. E. Payne, Worcester.	Mr John Taylor, Dudley.
Miss F. James, Worcester.	Mrs Eddows, Aston.
Mrs Hubert Leicester, Worcester.	Mr Henry Morgan, Ledbury.
Mrs Groves, Worcester.	Mr Bedford.
	Mrs Bedford.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference:—

GLOUCESTERSHIRE.—Cheltenham, Chipping Sodbury, Dursley, Newent, Northleach, Stow-on-the-Wold, Stroud, Tetbury, and Winchcomb.

HEREFORDSHIRE.—Bromyard, Dore, Kington, Ledbury, and Leominster.

SHROPSHIRE.—Bridgnorth, Church Stretton, Cleobury Mortimer, Clun, Drayton, Ellesmere, Madeley, Newport, Oswestry, Shifnal, Wellington, Wem, and Whitchurch.

STAFFORDSHIRE.—Leek, Lichfield, Newcastle, Stafford, Stone, Stoke-on-Trent, Uttoxeter, Walsall, Wolstanton and Burslem.

WARWICKSHIRE.—Alcester, Atherstone, Foleshill, Solihull, Southam.

WORCESTERSHIRE.—Bromsgrove, Droitwich, Martley, and Tenbury.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
DETENTION OF WOMEN AND THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN OUR WORKHOUSES. By Miss HELEN NEWILL, <i>Guardian, King's Norton Union</i> , - - - - -	8
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY. By the PRESIDENT, - - - - -	31

WEDNESDAY, 2ND MAY.

Mr M. G. LLOYD-BAKER said he must explain why his father (the Hon. Sec.) was not present. He thought this was the second Conference he had missed out of thirty-seven. He had not been at all well lately, and as he had a chance of going on a tour in Spain, his family made him go, hoping that the change would benefit his health. They undertook to do the work in his absence. Mr Lloyd-Baker referred to the help which had been rendered by his sister, and said he was sure his father was thinking of the Conference that day. It would be very gratifying to him to know it was such a large Conference; it might prove to be the largest they had ever had. The knowledge of its success would do him almost as much good as the trip to Spain. (Applause.)

Before commencing his presidential address, Sir William Chance, Bart., expressed regret at the announcement made by Mr Lloyd-

Baker that his father was not able to attend. He was sure that they all hoped the change would benefit his health. He was sorry to learn that he had not been well lately, and hoped that his health would be thoroughly restored. (Applause.)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

I FEEL it a great honour to have been invited to preside at this important Conference of Guardians of the West Midland Counties. I do not come before you entirely as a stranger, because my family has been for more than a century and still is closely associated with the district and with the particular county in which we are meeting to-day; while the older inhabitants of Malvern will still remember my uncle, the late Mr Edward Chance, who, during the many useful years he passed here, took so active and beneficial a part in the public work of the town and immediate neighbourhood.

To-day we are again meeting for the thirty-seventh time in Malvern to discuss subjects relating to Poor Law administration, and to learn from each other's experience how best to combat and restrain the growth of pauperism in the country. Although we may congratulate ourselves that the pauperism of England and Wales has been reduced from 62.7 in 1849 to 26.2 per 1,000 of population in 1905, and in this particular district from 56.5 to 29.9 during the same period, the increase during the last five years is very disturbing. For the year ended Lady Day 1892 the mean number of paupers of all classes in England and Wales stood at the lowest point that it has ever reached, viz., 744,757. Since then the number has risen to 884,365. The rise has been most marked since 1901, from 781,298 to 884,365, or from 24.3 to 26.2 per 1,000 of estimated population. No doubt the after effects of the war in South Africa have played a large part in the great increase since 1901, but I am afraid that a more moving cause has been a relaxation in the strictness which should attach to the administration of poor relief. It seems to me that the table of figures which I have drawn up illustrates the moving cause in a most remarkable manner.* This table shows the number of paupers (exclusive of lunatics in Asylums, &c., and vagrants) relieved in the six West Midland counties and in their eighty-one Unions on the 1st January 1900 and 1905 respectively. You will see that while the ordinary pauperism of the whole district stood at 26.5 per 1,000 of population on the latter date, that of the counties varied from 19.5 in Warwick to 35.5 in Hereford, and that of the Unions from 12.2 in Atcham (Salop) to 52.6 in Dore (Hereford). That Hereford should be so much more pauperised a county than Salop is somewhat extraordinary, and I cannot help thinking that the very great difference must be owing to a more lax administration of poor relief in the former county. In the county of Hereford no Union has a pauperism of less than 28.8.

* See pp. 59 *et seq.*

The Unions of Clun (Salop) and Dore (Hereford) are very similar in character as to density of population and rateable value, and yet one has only 21.2 paupers per 1,000 of population and the other 52.6. I also give these Unions as an example of how my figures may be usefully dealt with, with the help of the Returns of Pauperism for the 1st January 1905, and the Local Taxation Returns (Part I.) for the year ended Lady Day 1904 :—

				Clun.	Dore.
Population (1901)				8,491	7,325
Acreage				86,553	75,567
Population per 100 acres				9	9
Assessable value				£52,402	£60,477
INDOOR PAUPERS.	Able-bodied and their children	Males	2	9	0
		Females	3		6
		Children	4		0
					6
	Not able-bodied and other children	Males	20	38	35
Females		8	6		
Children		10	13		
Adult insane	Males	0	2	3	
	Females	2		4	
Total Indoor Paupers				49	67
OUTDOOR PAUPERS.	Able-bodied and their families	Males	4	37	10
		Females	12		24
		Children	21		77
	Not able-bodied and other children	Males	23	90	53
		Females	64		122
		Children	3		19
Insane				4	14
Total Outdoor Paupers				131	319
Total Indoor and Outdoor Paupers				180	386
Relief Expenditure, other than that on lunatics in Asylums, &c.	1. In-maintenance			£681	£731
	2. Out Relief			562	1,752
	3. Salaries of Union Officers and Servants, &c.			748	764
	4. Principal of Loans repaid and interest thereon			—	317
	5. Other Relief Expenses			267	281
Total Relief Expenditure				£2,258	£3,845
Expenditure per head of population				5s. 3½d.	10s. 6d.

I do not propose to take up any more time now by going fully into the figures given in the table. Perhaps there may be an opportunity of discussing them with you this evening, if we feel so inclined, after dinner: but I trust that they may set some of you inquiring into the causes of the differences which they so clearly show. And I can only hope that those Unions whose pauperism is high will begin setting their houses in order, and in doing so, not rely for assistance too much on the various socialistic proposals which seem to be so popular at the present day, or invoke more aid from the State. For instance, does any one here think that the pauperism of the country can be reduced by establishing Old-Age Pensions, or by giving free feeding to children attending our Elementary Schools? An absurd idea is entertained in many quarters that by establishing Old-Age Pensions we shall reduce the number of aged inmates in our Workhouses, and so reduce indoor relief expenditure materially. This is a vain expectation. How many old people could be safely moved from Workhouses we Guardians of the Poor know only too well: most are in the infirm and sick wards; many have no relations or friends to look after them; many could not be trusted outside. Of what use would 5s. a week be to them? The main expense of a Workhouse is in its permanent staff. Call the Workhouse what you will—Poorhouse, Almshouse—our civilisation could not exist without it, and its staff must be maintained. The Poor Law treats its aged poor with every consideration. The larger portion who seek its aid, and who are found to be destitute, of decent character, and with friends or relations to look after them, receive relief at their homes. Those in the Workhouse are treated with every possible kindness. It is not true to say that they are always unhappy and miserable. They have a great deal of liberty and they can see their friends. When I was going over my own Workhouse the other day a dear old man, who had just returned from the county hospital after an operation for cancer, quite voluntarily expressed himself “as happy as a cricket,” and he certainly looked so.

The advantage of our Poor Law is that you can relieve the aged poor who are destitute in the way best suited to their wants. Five shillings a week to every person over sixty-five would be too much for some and too little for others. By the establishment of Old-Age Pensions you will be tacking on another Poor Law to the existing one. By the great increase of taxation which their establishment would bring with it you will be adding a fresh burden on the taxpayers, and, as increased taxation always falls with the greatest force on the poor, you will be adding large numbers to the pauper class who now just manage to keep outside it; and increased taxation always carries with it increased rents and less employment. The rich suffer least, because they can cut off luxuries to meet increased taxation, and they can employ fewer people. The professional classes, who feel the burden of every penny added to the Income Tax, suffer almost as much as

the poor, because they have little margin for increased expenditure. But the poor themselves suffer most of all.

Then by establishing Old-Age Pensions we are throwing up the sponge; *i.e.*, we are abandoning all hope that the working classes may, by providence and prudence, so improve their position and status that provision for old age may become quite as feasible and natural for them as provision against sickness and death. We are also weakening the sense of filial duty. The State is to undertake a duty which falls naturally on the children, and which it should be considered their privilege to perform.

Then to turn to Free Feeding. By making over this duty to the State we shall be weakening the responsibility of parents towards their children, just as conversely by the establishment of Old-Age Pensions we shall be weakening the childrens' responsibility towards their parents. And here again we shall be adding to the burden of taxation. In a letter to the *Times*, on 21st April last, the President of the West Ham Municipal Alliance pointed out that "free feeding" meant an addition of 3s. 6d. to the rates. For the whole of London the cost of breakfast and dinner would be no less than £2,600,000, an addition to the County Council rate of 1s. 2d. in the pound. Speaking of West Ham, he said, "I have no intention of prophesying or threatening as to what will happen if the measure—Education (Provision of Meals) Bill—becomes law. I may say, however, that only two alternatives seem possible. The first is, that those employers of labour who can will leave West Ham, making the position of those who are compelled to remain more hopeless still. The second alternative, and the more probable, is that employers will be compelled to reduce wages in order to compensate themselves for the *largesse* which will be distributed to the working classes by the municipality."

Having already a Poor Law of an elastic character established in this country, why should we want to establish others—a Poor Law for the unemployed, a Poor Law for the aged poor, a Poor Law for the children, and so on through the list of quack medicines which are now prescribed for all our ills? But let us be careful to see that our present Poor Law is administered justly and without favouritism, whether it be in the matter of relief or in the appointment of officers. If we find that some other Union has very few paupers, let us examine into the reason why this is. We are, I think, too much inclined to keep to our own little grooves. One of the objects of these Conferences is to enable Guardians to learn what is being done in other Unions than their own, and to compare notes; and I hope that the figures with which I have supplied you will set you inquiring as to whether the lines on which you are working cannot be improved. You must remember that the Poor Law is upon its trial at the present moment. The fierce light of a Royal Commission is being thrown upon it, and I can only hope that it will come well out of the ordeal to which it is being submitted. For myself, I still believe that its principles are sound, and that the defects which may be found in it

are owing solely to those principles being disregarded.* I venture to make a few suggestions as to how they may be carried out :—

1. Have a fixed policy of relief, and stick to it.
2. Let there be an adequate staff of Relieving Officers, and be particular as to whom you appoint to the post.
3. Insist on the fullest information being given about every applicant for relief; and until you have got this information do not come to any definite decision on the case. The "case paper" system is a great help to this end.
4. Back up your Relieving Officers in their inquiry work by all means in your power.
5. Having got all the information about the case, make the relief sufficient to relieve its necessities, and do not lose sight of it.
6. As a corollary to 5, insist on the frequent and regular visiting of the cases assisted; and
7. Work in close co-operation with charitable agencies.

Finally, read the Annual Reports of the Local Government Board's Inspectors for your district; you will find them most instructive, and full of valuable hints for improved relief administration.

It now only remains for me to thank you for having given me so patient a hearing, and I am sure you will be grateful to me that I have not even introduced the expressions "indoor relief" and "outdoor relief" into my address, except in connection with my table of figures.

Miss HELEN NEWILL (King's Norton) then read the following paper :—

DETENTION OF WOMEN AND THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN OUR WORKHOUSES.

By Miss HELEN NEWILL,

Poor Law Guardian, King's Norton Union.

THE subject I have been asked to address you upon is indeed a distressing one. I should shrink from the task it imposes were it not that I have felt that the opportunity afforded me by the Conference Committee

* These main principles are (see Mr A. G. Willink's paper read at the Central Poor Law Conference of 1896) :—

- (1.) The promotion of the good of the community as a whole.
- (2.) The improvement of the condition of the poor.
- (3.) The effectual relief of destitution out of public moneys; and
- (4.) The lot of the pauper not to be made better than that of the independent labourer of the lowest class.

is a good one to lay before this representative meeting of Guardians not merely my own views, but also those of my co-rescue workers in and around the great city of Birmingham, upon what is undoubtedly an important but unattractive question.

During the past three years several Boards of Guardians have issued circular-letters advocating legislation empowering Poor Law authorities to detain women with illegitimate children who enter Work-houses.

One Board urged the detention of those of them of feeble intellect ; another was bold enough to ask for power to detain, for a period not exceeding twelve months, all single women delivered of an illegitimate child in the Workhouse, whilst another suggested the compulsory detention of those with a second child.

We thus get the important issue raised of depriving certain subjects of their liberty for that which the law does not, at present, recognise as a crime.

In considering this question, or indeed any other social problem, we cannot, I think, afford to wholly ignore the experience of the past, and I therefore desire to remind you that under a statute of 1576 the mother of an illegitimate child (or the reputed father) could be committed by Justices to gaol, there to remain until she (or he) gave sufficient surety to obey the Justices' order to maintain the child. The failure of this Act may be inferred from the next on the subject passed in 1610, which prescribed the punishment of imprisonment for one year against the woman for the first offence, and for the second, committal to the house of correction until she found sureties for her good behaviour. In some cases this must have been equivalent to imprisonment for life, but the severity of this was mitigated by an Act of 1801 which reduced the imprisonment to periods varying from six weeks to twelve months.

Both these Acts were defeated by the parents

running away, and leaving the child to be supported by the Parish.

In 1733 and 1809 statutes were passed under which the reputed father could be immediately apprehended and lodged in gaol until he could give security to indemnify the Parish. This was soon found to be entirely unsatisfactory, because any man not able to give security was placed at the mercy of any abandoned woman, inasmuch as he could be committed without previous summons on a charge made in his absence. The records of the Royal Commission of 1832 show that men and youths, absolutely innocent of the offence, were frequently dealt with in that way.

The Poor Law Act of 1834 repealed the Acts to which I have referred relating to the punishment of the mother (or of the putative father).

Since 1834 the illegitimate birth-rate has steadily declined, but to what extent the reduction can be attributed to the altered law no one can state accurately.

In 1845 one child in every fourteen, whose births were registered in England and Wales, was born out of wedlock; in 1880 the proportion was one in twenty, and in 1904 one in twenty-five. These figures represent the average for the country, but there is an extraordinary difference to be found in the proportion even in adjoining counties. For instance, taking the counties that form the area of this Conference, the Registrar-General gives Salop and Hereford as two amongst the seven counties with the highest proportion of illegitimate births (67 and 64 per 1,000 respectively), and Gloucester and Warwick as two of the lowest (34 and 32 per 1,000 respectively). Thus in Salop one child in every fifteen is illegitimate, whilst in Warwickshire the proportion is one in thirty-one.

The decrease of illegitimacy is encouraging, but it is deplorable that despite the advance of education, and the general march of progress, there should have been registered as born out of wedlock 37,674 children

in the year 1904. How many of these were born in Workhouses I do not know, but averaging them at 20 in each Union would give a total of 13,000.

Surely to detain the 13,000 women and let the other 24,000 go free would be an intolerable injustice.

Equally so with the proposal to detain unmarried women with a second child. A single woman with one child might be—indeed often is—a far worse character than the mother of two or three. I know a young girl, not eighteen, who has been sent to three different Homes. No one seems to be able to influence or control her. She has not had a child, but her character is such that she deserves to be detained far more than any second case I have had to deal with.

We must not forget, too, that if “detention” is to result from admission to the Workhouse, the crime of infanticide would inevitably greatly increase, and other evil-doing fatal to the character and health of our nation would, it is feared, be resorted to.

Neither must we forget that it is a two-sided question, and must be dealt with as such if it is to be treated as an offence against our laws. If depraved and demoralised women are to be locked up, then the same fate must be meted out to depraved and demoralised men.

I want you to consider not merely the proposal to deprive these wrong-doers who enter Workhouses of their liberty, but to follow me into an attempt to classify these women, and into a brief consideration of what has been done to rescue them from their wretchedness, and what I think might properly be done on their behalf.

Broadly the cases may be classified under three heads :—

1. The Feeble-minded.
2. The Irreclaimable.
3. The Reclaimable.

As to the Feeble-minded Class—Doubtless we shall

all agree that these should be under permanent custodial care, which is necessary alike in their own as in the public interest, but we urge the detention of this class because they are "feeble-minded," and not merely because some of them are mothers and unmarried. The Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded has already been urged by witnesses to recommend detention of this class, and it would do no harm if this Conference decided to support that view.

Some time—probably years—will, however, elapse before the desired legal power to detain this class is granted. Let me urge you to use in the meantime the power you have—that of kindly persuasion—to induce this class to remain under shelter of the Workhouse or of some special Home.

As to the second class, which I have termed the "Irreclaimable," I am very loth to call them so, but that there are some irreclaimable ones is, I fear, only too true. They are the women who have shown by their habits and mode of life that they are so, and this is a class which calls for the most careful treatment and consideration not only of Guardians, but of the Royal Commission on Poor Laws.

Before writing any woman down as irreclaimable, we should, I think, make the most exhaustive inquiries about her, and above all things ascertain if she has ever had a chance given her to reform, and if she has not, we should see that she has one before giving her up as irreclaimable.

It is a sad thought for us all, but I do not believe there would have been in the present day so many women to classify as irreclaimable if Christian men and women had done their duty by those poor creatures in the past.

I wonder how many of us have thought for a few moments what chance there is for a "fallen woman"? Her respectable friends, not always I know, but in many cases, will have nothing to do with her. Even

her parents frequently shut the door in her face. She has lost her character, and unless some one befriends and begs for her, who will receive her as a servant into their house? She has no one to whom she can turn unless it be to the acquaintances and companions who have led her into sin and from whose influence she should be saved.

Those of us who have done rescue work have heard harrowing recitals of the difficulties and temptations that beset a woman once she has fallen, and ceased to wonder why some promising girl has abandoned the struggle to live decently and has given herself up in despair to an immoral life.

Many of those whom we would write down as irreclaimable to-day have had a time or times of intense longing for escape, but the force of circumstances has been too much for them. Let us see to it that we do all we can not to add to our list of irreclaimables.

There is, however, no doubt that we have such women coming and going from our Workhouses to-day who will continue to live immoral lives if allowed their liberty. I could tell you many sad and terrible stories of them, and you could tell me many more—stories of women who enter Workhouses almost annually to give birth to a child, and directly their trouble is over return to their evil life till we meet them again in our maternity wards. What to do with such women is a great trouble and a great difficulty. There are many Guardians who strongly advocate that those unmarried women who have lost all self-control, and become so completely depraved and demoralised as to be a danger to and a burden upon the community, should have their liberty taken from them.

At first sight that may seem a reasonable proposition, and I confess that when I became a Poor Law Guardian I held that view, but if you will look closely into the question you will, I think, see the difficulties

and dangers ahead. The vast majority of these wretched women would stop at nothing to avoid entering a Workhouse if detention thereby resulted. For those who did so enter what reason would be assigned in the certificate? If the ground be "immorality" then both sexes must be treated alike, just as the law relating to "habitual drunkards" applies to both sexes. If the reason for detention be that of "being a mother whilst unmarried," then, as I have already shown, its application would only be partial, and therefore most unjust, whilst it would inevitably act as an incentive to the crime of infanticide.

In any case, a Workhouse would not be the place in which to compulsorily detain this class. A depraved woman compulsorily detained will, I think, ever be a source of danger to all with whom she comes in contact, and however careful the management may be her influence would be working as a poison, and however good the classification in our Workhouses may be we must know how impossible it would be to keep those women from contaminating those who know little or nothing of such evils. It is important to see that the moral atmosphere in a Workhouse is all for good, and we have no right to mix young girls or older respectable women with depraved women any more than we have to allow in their midst a patient suffering from some infectious disease.

I am convinced that more harm than good would result from attempting to remedy the vice of immorality by compulsory detention even of the irreclaimables, and I therefore urge you to devote your attention to the work of reformation in the next class, which we will term the "*Reclaimable*."

This is the hopeful, and therefore the most interesting, class. Anyone who has been a rescue worker will agree with me, I am sure, that work done amongst this class is abundantly rewarded, and although it is an expensive work at the time, it is one which, if

systematically carried out, must, from a ratepayer's point of view, prove economical in the end.

What we as Guardians want to do is this: when we find a young girl or young woman in our maternity ward, we should do our utmost to teach her, or to see she is taught, that her own firmness, good sense, and modesty are the only safeguards on which she can properly rely. Should she fall a second time she has done so with her eyes fully open, and knowing good has deliberately chosen evil; I believe that if this were *always done* we should in a few years' time find a reduction in the number of the class we so much deplore now—the irreclaimables—and by so reducing them the question of powers of detention would seldom arise.

To train a young girl sufficiently to be able to maintain herself and her child respectably, and to teach her how to protect herself from the dangers of life costs money, but surely it is wiser to pay almost any sum for three years than it is to have her and her two, three, or more children chargeable to the rates till the latter are grown up, or to have her join the class we know so well as irreclaimable.

I am persuaded that the Workhouse is the wrong place for *young* unmarried mothers—that at all costs they should be kept away from it.

In one of the Birmingham Workhouses last year a small child, barely thirteen, was delivered of a child. She has since been in a Home at Edgbaston, and under close supervision for the last nine months, and the report we have of her is that she is absolutely free from all knowledge of evil. The baby died, and the child-mother does not seem to understand her position at all. Now, think of that child being admitted to the wards of our Workhouses. Surely you will all agree with me that the moral atmosphere is such no young girl should be introduced into, if we want to save her from learning more evil than she already knows.

To meet this difficulty and do the good we would,

what we really want to see throughout the country is a sufficient number of Homes for these young girls to which Guardians, after due consideration, could send suitable cases at a cost of so much per head per week. The cost should not exceed that of maintenance in a Workhouse; the ratepayers, therefore, would only be paying for the case to be maintained at some institution other than the Workhouse.

In these Homes special training would be given, individual interest taken in each young mother. She should be placed under good influence; she should be taught from a religious basis how to maintain herself, and to take care of herself, taught to nurse and bring up her child, for I would not separate the mother from the child. Surely to do so is against all the laws of nature.

In many cases the love the mother has for the child is most noticeable, in others it needs careful drawing out; but in all cases it needs fostering and using, because unless it is there, and there strongly, one has little or no hope of reclaiming the mother.

It has been suggested that separate quarters might be provided in the Workhouses for these young and promising cases, but this would be quite impossible in most Workhouses. At King's Norton, for instance, it would be obviously a most expensive, and therefore impossible, policy, for we do not think we should ever have more than six girls diagnosed at one time as being worthy of such special treatment, and many weeks there might be only one.

I should like to see a maternity ward at each Home, but if this should be objected to, the girl might be admitted to her Workhouse for actual confinement, returned to the Home with her baby as soon as she is strong enough, where she should be allowed to stay until she was sufficiently trained in *all* ways to make a fresh start in life.

She should be encouraged to come back from time to time to report herself, and also should be encouraged

to feel that in any difficulty, such as bad health or loss of work, she would receive not only sympathy and good sound advice, but, if necessary to tide over some special time of need, money help as well, which she would afterwards be expected to repay.

A girl at whatever age, if found after admission to such a Home to be a thoroughly bad character, and so be doing harm to the other girls, would be returned at once to the Workhouse—our object being to save from immoral teaching and contact those girls who are more sinned against than sinning.

The Birmingham Workhouse Magdalen Charity has such a scheme in view. It proposes to try and get such a Home started by voluntary contributions; afterwards it is hoped the Home may be self-supporting by Guardians' payments and work done, for it would be necessary to have some paying work, such as laundry and needle work, for the girls to do.

The Magdalen Charity is at present working in the three Workhouses of Birmingham, Aston, and King's Norton; all young mothers with their first child are placed under its care, and after leaving the Home are helped in many ways. The result has been most encouraging, but the Committee and workers feel that their work would be greatly helped and benefited by the establishment of a Home. So many of the girls are so helpless—some of them are factory workers only earning 7s. or 8s. a week, and, without teaching and timely help, have no prospect of legitimately earning more. As domestic servants they get, with few exceptions, not more than £13 a year, or 5s. a week. To place their baby out to nurse with a respectable woman costs quite 5s. per week, and clothes for the baby are also expected to be found. It is therefore quite impossible for these girls to manage unless they are helped. We get affiliation orders whenever we can, but that does not always mean that the money is forthcoming by a long way.

Also, there are many drawbacks to the affiliation order as at present administered, for unless the girl has some one to whom the money can be paid, it is a very, very questionable thing to let her come into contact weekly with the man who has brought her to such shame; it has often led to a repetition of the offence, or sometimes led to marriage, which has ended in cruelty or desertion.

Whilst holding the man strictly responsible, I would guard the woman from falling again a victim to his vice by appointing an intermediary to receive the payments.

We as a Committee feel our helplessness in not being able to influence the girls as we would when they have returned to their surroundings. We want, if possible, to break the connection with their past, and to do this effectually we want a Home for them.

At present no definite scheme for a Home has been prepared. My own Board has promised its help and support, and we confidently expect the other Boards will do the same when we have laid before them some plan.

I ask you all to earnestly consider the proposition of Homes other than the Workhouse for the reclaimable, and I also urge upon you all to begin the work of reformation, not with those who have had three or four children by shutting them up for a year or two in the Workhouse, but with the young and hopeful, and do all in your power to save them from going down another rung of the social ladder.

In conclusion, I trust that you may feel that to compulsorily detain all unmarried mothers who enter Workhouses would be an intolerable injustice, and do more harm than good, and that I may have persuaded you to make the very best of your opportunities whilst these women are under your care, to see that at least they are given a reasonable opportunity of being taught self-restraint and a due sense of their responsibility.

DISCUSSION.

Mr W. DAVIS (West Bromwich) said he was delighted with Miss Newill's paper, which dealt with a question that demanded serious consideration. For thirty years he had moved amongst unfortunate young women, and his experience was that nothing would win them like love. Kindness had won back those whom some might have thought had fallen beyond recovery. Where did the majority of these young women come from? An advertisement for a clerk would bring in thirty applications against one for a situation as a domestic servant. Girls did not care to be servants now, because they wanted their liberty. Low music halls and concert-rooms were the delight of the majority of these young girls at the present day, and in this way they were often led to ruin. As soon as a woman lost her virtue, she seemed to lose all hope. Men seemed to have licence to do wrong, and went into society as if nothing had happened; but let a woman make a mistake, and she was never forgiven. This was a terrible question. One day his Board wanted two bad characters who were in the House to come before them; but the Master did not dare to fetch them. He (the speaker) said he would go to them. He went down into the ward, and in a few minutes touched a tender chord. He spoke to them of childhood's days and of a kind mother, and they burst into tears, and came to the Board Room with him. The only way to win these girls was by kindness and sympathy. Young girls would not go to service, but preferred the factory. They went to concert halls, became inflamed with drink, and many of them fell never to be reclaimed. Things were drifting, and getting worse and worse. What was the remedy? To retain young mothers in the Workhouses would be a great mistake. Rescue workers were needed. His experience was that these unfortunate girls were more pressed down and ridiculed by their own sex than by the men. He had helped many a young girl to get married, and had seen them become happy wives.

Rev. G. W. JOHNSON (Wolverhampton) congratulated Miss Newill upon dealing so admirably with a difficult and delicate subject. He had heard other ladies speak on this question, but they had not usually treated it with the same tenderness as Miss Newill, and had been very hard on their own sex—harder, he thought, as a rule, than the men were. There were two points at the end of the paper which seemed to sum up the whole thing. One question was how to deal with the irreclaimable. He had known cases which came to the Workhouse for even the fifth and sixth time, and for women such as these he thought there ought to be detention of some kind. (Hear, hear.) As to first cases, he had never heard a better suggestion than that made by Miss Newill, and he hoped a resolution would go from that Conference advocating Homes for their reception.

Mr G. BEARD (Burton-on-Trent) asked whether they could not petition the Local Government Board to formulate some scheme? If they were going to provide Homes for the retention of these women, why should it be a burden on the rates? He thought it was a question for the State. He was quite in favour of Homes being set apart, but the State ought to provide them.

Mr W. G. LOVEDAY (Rugby) did not think this was a subject which Boards of Guardians could deal with on the lines suggested in the paper. It was more a matter for lady Guardians to deal with, in connection with outside agencies. In the Rugby Union they had cases of girls returning again and again; and certainly the ratepayers ought to have some means of protecting themselves against this abuse. He was not going to say who was the greater sinner—the man or the woman—but the law was at the disposal of the woman against a man who took unfair advantage of her. There was not that condition on the other side. He did not see that any good would arise from Guardians establishing Homes out of the rates to maintain these women and their children. He did not see how any Home could be conducted without increasing the cost of dealing with the cases of this kind now received in the Workhouse. There would be a multiplication of expense, and he thought no good could come from it. Lady Guardians could deal with the cases, in conjunction with outside agencies, better than on the lines laid down in the paper, which was an excellent one, and evidently written with the best intentions in the world.

Mr C. J. BLAGG (Cheadle) was of opinion that the previous speaker had misunderstood Miss Newill's proposition. As he himself understood it, and he thought he was right, she had no intention of putting an additional burden upon the ratepayers of the country, because she expressly stated that these Homes were proposed to be started by voluntary contributions. She also hoped that in process of time they would be to a great extent self-supporting. There was a Home of this character, in a large measure self-supporting, in Staffordshire. In so far as it was not self-supporting, it was kept going by voluntary contributions. He himself, being one of that overburdened class, a ratepayer—(laughter)—felt a great deal of sympathy with the gentleman who spoke against ratepayers having further demands made upon them; but he was bound to say that Miss Newill's suggestion was a good one. They should not endeavour to keep these poor creatures an indefinite time in the Workhouse, because it was quite obvious to anybody who knew the inner life of the Workhouse that they would be subject there to great temptations and risk of further contamination. The sooner they were placed under loving, intelligent, and sympathetic supervision, such as these girls would have in a Home, the better it would be for them. He had not had the personal experience which Miss Newill had had; he had not been a rescue worker, but he had been a Guardian for forty years, and Chairman of his Union for the last twenty-nine years, and

had seen something of the working of the Poor Law in all its branches. There was no branch in which their sympathies were more called for, and in which their efforts could be better bestowed, than in the direction to which Miss Newill's paper referred. For his own part, he felt extremely grateful to Miss Newill for the tactful and excellent way in which she had dealt with this delicate subject. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that before the discussion closed some practical resolution would be put before the Conference which would lead to improvement in this matter. Mr Crooks, the Member for Woolwich, at a meeting of Poor Law Unions in London, when a question of this kind was under consideration, remarked: "We have said a great deal about these poor women; I should like to say something about the rascals who caused their downfall." There was sense in that, but unfortunately they could not get at these rascals. These poor women had a burden to bear, and it ought to be the Guardians' duty and privilege to do what they could to lessen it. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT: Having been a Guardian for forty years, do you find that the number of these women coming into the Workhouse has at all decreased during your experience?

Mr BLAGG: I have not got the statistics before me. Ours is a comparatively small Workhouse, and the inmates generally number from 100 to 115. I do not think there is anything remarkable in the way of increase or decrease.

Miss B. WALTON EVANS (Local Government Board Inspector) thought that in every Workhouse in England and Wales rescue workers should be appointed to deal with these cases. They would then be able to advise the Guardians whether such cases were reclaimable and should be treated specially by being sent to Homes. It was personal influence that counted, and this was why she wanted to see more Homes provided. She did not think that special powers of detention were required, because these girls would go into the Homes of their own free will, with the wish and determination to regain their characters. (Hear, hear.) As to the irreclaimables, she would leave them to the Conference. There was another class of girls which Guardians and rescue-workers ought to deal with, namely, the feeble-minded. She hoped the day was not far distant when Guardians would not be guilty—as they were now, at times—of sending out feeble-minded girls to service, knowing too well it was trusting to luck that they would not come back again on the rates, bringing others with them. She hoped the Conference would send up to the Royal Commission something in the nature of a resolution that feeble-minded girls should be detained in the hope that they might be made more effective citizens. In regard to cases of immorality, she knew, as a Board of Health Inspector going about the country, that overcrowding and want of proper sleeping accommodation had a great deal to do with the very high percentage of illegitimate births in certain counties. Many cases of immorality were due to the sweating system. As they had heard that afternoon, there was

a high percentage of illegitimate births in Salop and Hereford. Another cause of immorality, besides overcrowding, improper sleeping accommodation, and the sweating system, was the parents' want of control over their children when they were young, and they were not properly trained. They should think of the importance of this question, not only to themselves, but to the nation at large. (Applause.)

Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Clerk, Bristol Union) said he was in general agreement with the contentions in Miss Newill's paper. It had been suggested that afternoon that a resolution should be sent from the Conference expressing a strong feeling in favour of the detention of feeble-minded women ; but he would point out that at the Conference held in Malvern exactly a year ago, when Mr Manton, of Birmingham, read a paper on the question of the protection of the mentally defective, the following resolution was passed :—"That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that powers of detention are necessary for such mentally-defective persons as are proved to be incapable of self-maintenance and self-protection, subject to accommodation for such persons being provided apart from Workhouses, and to a grant in aid being made from the Imperial funds for all cases so provided for." This resolution, said Mr Simpson, covered the recommendation of Miss Newill. At the same time, the labours of the Royal Commission on the question of the treatment of the feeble-minded had been so long continued, that it might be desirable to repeat that resolution that day. With reference to the question generally, for the last four years efforts had been made in Bristol in two directions, in regard to the treatment of young mothers in Workhouses. In the first place, to drive home to the men their share of the responsibility in bringing these poor women to the lying-in ward ; and further, by means of lady rescue-workers, to endeavour to help poor girls after their confinement. The fact of the Guardians doing everything they could to obtain affiliation orders against the parents of the children born in the Workhouse might be thought by some to have a tendency to increase the number of women resorting to the Workhouse, but this had not been their experience in the Bristol Union. In 1899, before any persistent effort was made to secure an affiliation order in every case, 90 illegitimate children were born in the two Bristol Workhouses. In the first year, when steps were regularly taken towards obtaining affiliation orders, there were 75 illegitimate births ; the next, 77 ; the next, 74 ; and the next, 79. Action was taken in this way. The relieving officer who gave an admission note to the woman sent a special report to him, as Clerk, giving the fullest information that could be obtained from the mother as to the parentage of her child. The Board laid great emphasis upon this, because it was frequently found that when a woman once got into the Workhouse she was very unwilling to give any information. Their plan, as far as possible, was to refuse to admit to the Workhouse unless full information were given ; but in certain

stages, of course, it would be impossible to do this. As a rule, however, the women came some weeks before the confinement was expected, in which case, difficulties were thrown in the way of giving them an admission note until they gave all the information they could. After admission, the Matron of the Workhouse exercised careful supervision, made notes as to character, and also endeavoured to obtain evidence in corroboration of the statement previously given. Ladies forming a Rescue Work Committee visited the Workhouse, and did what they could to obtain information as to the woman, and endeavoured to form some plan of helping her after the confinement had taken place. The assistant collector then made inquiries with a view of obtaining affiliation orders. Out of 417 cases which he had inquired into since the adoption of this system, only 156 had failed through absolute want of corroboration. He did not mean to say that in all the other cases orders were obtained. As a matter of fact, only 101 orders were made, but in the other cases the women had left the Workhouse before the affiliation proceedings could be completed, or had married, or had died, or the death of the child had occurred. In some 104 cases the various inquiries had not been completed before they left the Workhouse ; but he thought that 25 per cent. was a fair average of orders, seeing the class of cases resorting to the Workhouse. Miss Clifford, whose name was well known, and who took great interest in any work for the benefit of the poor, was unable to attend, but she wished to make the following suggestions :—

1. Steps should be taken to obtain an affiliation order, and to recover cost of mother's maintenance as soon as she becomes chargeable.
2. In any case, all expenses incurred by the Guardians should be recoverable.
3. The putative father should be called upon to find security for the payments he is ordered by the magistrates to make.
4. The death of the mother should not prevent a maintenance order being made if the evidence of paternity is sufficient.
5. Five shillings should not be the maximum payment ordered in court.
6. If a child, over sixteen, is unfit from bodily or mental condition to maintain itself, the father should continue to be liable to maintain it.
7. The child should be legally liable to maintain its mother in her old age.
8. The mother should be legally able to appoint a guardian to the child.

Mr Simpson continued that he could not say that he entirely agreed with all the suggestions made by Miss Clifford ; but he strongly urged that action should be taken similar to that at Bristol, and that the fathers should be compelled to contribute towards the maintenance of the children. A large number of women had been helped by the rescue workers, and placed in situations, homes, and various institu-

tions, much good being done. Miss Clifford wished him to say that she was entirely in agreement with the views of Miss Newill. He should like to urge that the resolution passed at the last Conference should be passed again that day.

Lieut.-Gen. PHELPS (King's Norton) paid a tribute to Miss Newill's valued services in rescue work, and said she had a practical knowledge of the difficulties which beset the problem under discussion. Mr Johnson, of Wolverhampton, had urged the detention of the women after the fifth or sixth case, but he thought he had overlooked the practical difficulties in the way of converting Workhouses into prisons. A Workhouse must either be a place from which people could discharge themselves at will, or a prison, in which case gaolers, warders, and other officials would be needed. The Poor Law system would have to be entirely upset before they could convert a Workhouse into a prison. If the children lived, it became almost a practical impossibility for the mother to discharge herself, as it was obvious she could not maintain five or six illegitimate children. The Guardian from Burton-on-Trent, Mr Beard, thought that any cost should fall upon the taxes, and not upon the rates, but he appeared to have overlooked the necessity of local knowledge and local control over this expenditure. (Hear, hear.) To throw the cost upon the taxes would be to open a source of waste uncontrollable by the people who knew the actual facts. Mr Loveday, of Rugby, said that he considered the proposal in Miss Newill's paper impracticable, and that these women would be no better in Homes than in Workhouses. He thought Mr Loveday was mistaken there. The atmosphere of a Workhouse was entirely different from the atmosphere of a voluntary Home, established by charity, and supervised by ladies who devoted themselves to the reclamation of women in an unfortunate position. They might hope that reform would be effected in a Home, which was really an educational establishment. This reform they could not hope for in a Workhouse, which was the resort of the destitute. Mr Loveday thought that the cost of maintenance in the Homes must exceed the cost in the Workhouses; but if they considered that the building would be erected, established, and maintained by charity, and that all the Unions would be expected to pay would be the amount expended, under present conditions, for the maintenance of these women in the Workhouse, it was obvious that the cost would be less in the Homes than in the Workhouses. Mr Blagg, of Cheadle, recognised the fact that these Homes would be supported by voluntary enterprise. As to the punishment of rascals, to which Mr Blagg had referred, they all wished that that could take place; but that was a question which did not concern Boards of Guardians, whose business was the relief of destitution. They were therefore obliged to leave that out of consideration. That punishment should follow might be desirable, but Guardians could not inflict it. The remarks of Miss Walton Evans were very much to the point. What was required in these cases was the personal influence of devoted women like Miss Newill, who had

rescued many girls already, and those who followed her lead would be able to rescue many. This was a question chiefly for women, who, if cases were received in a Home, could appeal to the young mothers directly. It was practically an educational work. Mr Simpson, of Bristol, suggested that these unfortunate women should be put on the rack until they confessed who their partner in guilt was, before admission. ("No! no!") The sole claim for admission to the Workhouse was destitution; Guardians must recognise this, and it was no use holding a destitute woman at arm's length, and trying to extort from her the name of her partner in wrongdoing. It was no doubt desirable to obtain the information, but to hold them at arm's length at the door of the infirmary was impracticable. There was hope to be gathered from the statistics showing that the number of these cases had decreased in England; they had decreased in the King's Norton Workhouse. On the whole, they could congratulate themselves that, whether from education or increased remuneration of female labour, the trouble was diminishing, and they hoped that, as progress went on, a still further decrease might be seen. There was one point to which Miss Newill had not directed attention, and that was the question of settlement. The Homes to which Miss Newill looked forward would serve a great number of Unions, and if women were admitted from various Unions they might acquire a settlement in one Union which they ought not to have. A trustee in affiliation cases was desirable; whether the trustee should be the Clerk to the Guardians or the relieving officer was a question for the Conference to consider.

Mrs BRACEY (Birmingham) warmly supported the suggestion contained in Miss Newill's paper that Homes for young unmarried mothers should be formed. She said that in Birmingham a large number of first cases passed through the Workhouses every year. There were quite seventy first cases annually, besides second and third. After all, first cases were the most important. In the Workhouse there was no opportunity for classification, and it went to her heart to see respectable young girls who had been cruelly deceived compelled to go where there were many depraved and degraded characters. ("Shame.") Many girls came out worse than they went in. She could not help thinking that some of their gentlemen colleagues on Boards of Guardians did not sufficiently consider the importance of this question. She found it so on the Birmingham Board. She did not get very much sympathy, and, except from a few individuals, she did not get very much help. It was very up-hill work to try to deal with these girls as they should be dealt with. She therefore warmly welcomed the suggestion for a Home for the three Unions connected with Birmingham. Many of the difficulties which had been spoken of that afternoon would be overcome if earnest efforts were made. Miss Newill had suggested in her paper that, instead of paying for the maintenance of the girls in the Workhouse, they should be paid for in the Homes out of the rates. She

knew that part of the funds were to come from private charity, but did not think it right that all the money should be found by the charitably disposed. It was in the interest of the ratepayers that these girls should be looked after, and they would cost the rates no more in a Home than in the Workhouse. In a Home there would be a greater possibility of saving these young women, and putting them in a respectable way of life. She hoped something of this sort would be done. All who were working amongst these girls were wishing for a place besides the Workhouse, where moral influences could be brought to bear, so that those who had fallen could be set upon their feet again and given a new start in life, as most of them deserved to have. It was the duty of the Guardians to go to the root of the matter. (Applause.)

Mrs Bracey then proposed the following resolutions :—

“(1) That this Conference is strongly of opinion that those unmarried mothers who are so mentally defective as to be a danger to themselves and to the community should be placed under permanent custodial care, and urges the Royal Commission on the Care of the Feeble-Minded to recommend accordingly.”

“(2) That much good would result if there were established a sufficient number of voluntary Homes, where unmarried mothers, suitable for special treatment, could be sent with their own consent by Boards of Guardians, at a weekly cost approximating to the maintenance in Workhouses.”

Mr G. SMITH (Tamworth) said that allusion had been made to the fact that they were Guardians not only of the rates but also of the poor. This was a dictum of which they ought to be proud indeed. As Guardians of the poor they were not only Guardians of the ordinary casual, of the aged and infirm, and of the feeble, but they were also Guardians of those who through moral lapses came under their jurisdiction. Referring to the pleasure which the paper had given him, Mr Smith remarked, amidst laughter, that Birmingham appeared to be the great educating influence of Britain at the present day. One gentleman who came from Selly Oak said that if they lost local control they would lose interest. Moral and material interest must be retained. So far as the feeble-minded were concerned, it was the practice of the Tamworth Board to exercise diligence. With regard to the moral atmosphere of Workhouses, as a rule young girls who had fallen for the first time were obliged to mix with some persons of middle age whose influence was not good, and on that account he was pleased to support the proposal that Homes should be established. As a Guardian, he felt almost ashamed that the Tamworth Board had not a lady to champion the cause of women. So far as his influence went, he would always support separate Homes to which young women could be sent.

The PRESIDENT: I am sure Mr Smith will try to find a lady Guardian for Tamworth. (Laughter.)

Mrs WALTER BROWNE (Worcester) said the Workhouses were gratuitous hotels for the lowest of the population, so far as the able-bodied were concerned, and their influence was bound to have a deteriorating effect. These people would not work, but grumbled at everything done for them. It would be much better for young women who had fallen to go to a Home where there was a religious influence, as the temptations of a girl who had strayed from the path of virtue were greater than before she fell, and she should be placed amidst surroundings where the highest motives could be put before her. At the same time, Boards of Guardians must not flatter themselves that it was not going to cost anything. If Boards of Guardians placed feeble-minded women out at the cost of their maintenance, the work formerly done by them in the Workhouses would have to be done by others, and a larger number of servants would be required in the Workhouses.

The Hon. MABEL VERNEY (Stratford-on-Avon) said that the question of what was to become of the children was a serious one, because if the mothers went into Homes, as Miss Newill suggested—and it seemed almost the best suggestion—they must take their babies with them, and the difficulty was that if, a year after admission, a situation was found for the mother, what would become of the child? Was it to go back to the Workhouse, or was it to be boarded out? Cottagers were always willing to take a baby a few weeks old, and they became greatly attached to it, but people were not so ready to take a child which had already come under the love and influence of another. They would find some difficulty in boarding out a child a year, eighteen months, or two years old, and the expense would be greater. They should have some definite idea as to what they were going to do about the children. She thought the Homes should be supported by voluntary effort. It was an excellent suggestion that in every Workhouse people should be engaged in rescue work.

Mr A. TAYLOR (Shipston-on-Stour) asked, if women were taken from the Workhouses to a Home, and they proved irreclaimable, where would they go? If they had Homes for reclaimables, they must have Homes—or prisons, he might term them—for irreclaimables.

Mrs EDDOWES (Aston) said she knew a great deal about Miss Newill's work. She did not agree with one Guardian that the majority of the girls who fell were those who worked in factories and went to music halls. In her experience the majority of the girls were domestic servants. A great responsibility rested upon mistresses. These girls were allowed out on Sunday, and perhaps one night in the week until a late hour, when the mischief was often done. She would be thankful to hear of anything that would ensure the care of the feeble-minded. She felt strongly against any legislation for the detention of these young women in Workhouses. She wished that

Homes could be established, and hoped that her own Board of Guardians would agree to send their young women there.

Mr W. H. PRITCHARD (Wolverhampton) seconded the resolutions proposed by Mrs Bracey. He said that they had heard a lot of speeches, and the chief objection urged against the provision of Homes and other means of reclaiming these young mothers was the cost. This was not one of the things they ought to consider in a question like this, when they should aim at placing the young women in a position in which they could maintain themselves and regain the moral character they had lost.

The first resolution moved by Mrs Bracey was then put to the Conference, and carried unanimously.

Rev. L. S. STALEY (Burton-on-Trent) said they were pretty well agreed that rescue work should be adopted in the Unions, in order to persuade these young mothers to go into Homes. For that to be done, there must be workers. On his Board they had lady Guardians, but a great many Boards had none, and had no ladies' visiting committee. It was the ladies' visiting committee that could do this work. In his Union they had a ladies' visiting committee which worked the Brabazon scheme and other matters. It would be a good thing if the Conference recommended that those Boards which did not possess ladies' visiting committees should establish them. They would be a great help in regard to Homes for reclaimable women.

Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Bristol) understood that General Phelps feared that if Homes were established persons sent from one Union of a group would become settled in the Union in which the institution was situated. If General Phelps made that suggestion seriously, he must say that he knew of no provision of the settlement laws which would have that effect. Mr Simpson said he must utter a mild protest at the interpretation which General Phelps put upon his suggestion that they should obtain information from applicants before admission. It was the duty of the Guardians to get this information.

Mrs JAMES (Warwick) thought the time had come when a thorough change of the Poor Law should be introduced. If the Workhouse, as it had existed for many years, ever had a welcome, it had certainly lived long enough to wear that welcome out. (Laughter.) If feeble-minded women were taken from the beginning, these cases would be prevented, and they would not have to think out plans of action after the mischief had been done. She thought the walls of the Conference hall had rung for many years past with the desire for Homes for the feeble-minded ; but they were still in the same position as when the question first arose. Nothing had been done to provide these Homes, apart from isolated effort here and there. A wholesale change was wanted, with something different all round. The very old people should be in infirmaries, and the able-bodied should be made to work. It was nothing but a crime that honest men should have to work hard to maintain their families, while rascals

were allowed to be idlers, and to throw their responsibilities upon others.

The PRESIDENT thought Mr Simpson was right in his contention as to settlement. So long as a case was chargeable, and sent to a Home, it could not gain a settlement in the parish to which it was sent. They could only gain a settlement when they ceased to be chargeable. As he gathered from the paper, Miss Newill did not propose that the Boards of Guardians should establish these Homes. They would be established by rescue societies and other voluntary associations. Boards of Guardians would then be able to send cases, which became chargeable to the rates, to these Homes, by making payments just sufficient for their maintenance in these institutions. He thought that if these Homes could be established, they would be found of great use and value to Boards of Guardians, and probably there would be a saving of expense, because if these women entered Homes, and came under good influences, it was possible that they would never hear of them again, whereas if they were admitted to the Workhouse, and then went out again, they were apt to return in the same plight as they were before. (Applause.)

The second resolution proposed by Mrs Bracey was carried unanimously.

Miss NEWILL in replying said that no doubt a great many of the young mothers were domestic servants. As to the three Birmingham Workhouses, the greater number of cases in the King's Norton and Aston Unions which passed through their hands last year were domestic servants; in the Birmingham Union there were more factory workers. They had noticed, in connection with the Birmingham Workhouse Magdalen Charity, that a large percentage of the girls were really respectable. Parents had shut their doors in their faces, and the rescue workers were anxious to reclaim them. She believed that the Homes would effect a saving to the ratepayers. They wished to start a Home by voluntary contributions, and all the Guardians were asked to do was to send cases to it in the same way as they would send a promising young man to a labour colony. The only way in which she thought there would be added expense was this. In the Workhouse they would probably get rid of a girl after a month or six weeks, but a young mother would probably be kept in a Home for a year, or even two or three. She did not think anyone could object to this, seeing that young women would be set upon their feet again. As an illustration, Miss Newill referred to the cases of two girls who had been reclaimed, and were now supporting themselves respectably, and doing good work in the world.

A vote of thanks was heartily accorded to Miss Newill for her paper, on the motion of the Rev. G. W. Johnson, who said they had already shown their appreciation of it by adopting resolutions in favour of the suggestions put forward.

It was resolved to send the first resolution to the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded, and to the President of the Local Govern-

ment Board ; and the second to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, and to the President of the Local Government Board.

THURSDAY, 3RD MAY.

There was a somewhat larger attendance on the second day, when the Conference was continued under the Presidency of Sir William Chance.

CONFERENCE BUSINESS.

Mr M. G. LLOYD-BAKER, who acted as Secretary for his father, submitted the statement of accounts, showing that the year began with £42. 14s. 8d. in hand. The subscriptions had amounted to £12, and after providing for the expenditure of the year (£3. 4s. 8d.), there remained £51. 10s. to be carried forward. His father wished him to say, with regard to the somewhat large balance, that in the past it had happened special printing or other work had been required, and at such times a good balance in hand had been useful. He did not think, therefore, it wise at present to make any reduction in the already very small subscription from the various Boards.

It was resolved to convene a meeting of the Conference during the year to discuss the question of finance, and the general arrangements connected with the Conference.

For the ensuing year the Conference Committee was constituted as follows :—Birmingham, Mr J. R. Turner ; Gloucestershire, Mr F. W. B. Cripps ; Worcestershire, Rev. Geo. Astbury ; Shropshire, Rev. T. Auden ; Warwick, Mr Wilson ; Stafford, Mr W. H. Pritchard ; Herefordshire, Mr Hugh Ronalds ; Bristol, Mr E. C. Tyack.

The election of representatives on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences was next taken, the retiring members being —Mr H. J. Sayer, Birmingham ; Mr F. W. B. Cripps, Coxwell House, Cirencester ; and Mr G. E. Lloyd-Baker, Hardwicke Court, Gloucestershire (Hon. Secretary of the West Midland Poor Law District). The last-named two were re-elected. To fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of Mr Sayer, the following were nominated : Mr J. R. Turner, Birmingham ; Mr W. H. Pritchard, Wolverhampton ; and Mr T. O. Williams, Aston. Mr Pritchard was elected.

Mr G. E. Lloyd-Baker was unanimously re-appointed Hon. Secretary.

The Hon. Secretary stated that 35 Unions were represented at the Conference, the number of Delegates being 110. This was the largest attendance there had been for many years past. (Hear, hear.)

It being necessary that Sir William Chance should vacate the chair in order to read his paper, it was resolved, on the motion of Sir John Cotterell, that Mr C. J. Blagg (Cheadle Union), the senior Delegate present, should preside over the proceedings for the rest of the day.

The PRESIDENT then read the following paper :—

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY (1906).

BY SIR WILLIAM CHANCE, Bart.

*A Member of the Departmental Committee; Guardian of the Hambledon Union, Surrey; and
Hon. Secretary, Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.*

I WILL begin my paper by divulging a secret, and that is, that when the Departmental Committee commenced their inquiry they sat down to the table with absolutely open and unbiassed minds on the subject. The conclusion to which they came was based entirely on the evidence, and it was a unanimous conclusion. This is a fact which should, I think, commend the Report to the most careful consideration of the country. When representatives of the Home Office, of the Local Government Board, and of the Prison Commissioners are united in their recommendations (for Mr Simpson's memorandum is only a criticism of detail, and Captain Eardley Wilmot's memorandum does not affect any of the recommendations), the evidence must have been very strong to bring about so striking a unanimity on so very complicated a subject.

To begin with, the history of the question shows very clearly that it has never at any time been dealt with in a thoroughly scientific manner. "From the very start of the system—under which the vagrant ceased to be regarded simply as a criminal to be repressed, and became partly chargeable to the Poor Law authorities—his treatment has followed no general principles, but has been practically left to the whims and wishes of local administrators. The orders of the Central authority, which were issued to secure uniformity of treatment, have wholly failed to do so; and a similar absence of consistency in the enforcement of the law has characterised the action of the

police and the magistrates. Between the Poor Law and the police the vagrant has flourished. It has been well said that the police authorities treat the vagrant as a criminal but do not punish him, while the Poor Law authorities treat him as a pauper but do not relieve him." (P. 120.)

It is possible—I do not say it is probable—that, if the new Poor Law had from the very beginning refused to recognise the wayfarer as any other than a destitute person to be relieved in the ordinary way by an order for the Workhouse, as was indeed suggested to the House of Lords Committee of 1888, this might have been a solution of the problem. (Q. 9,787.) Such high authorities as Mr Albert Pell and Mr W. Vallance adduced very strong arguments in favour of this course before the passing of the Casual Poor Act of 1882, but the Committee referred to definitely reported in favour of retaining the distinction between the vagrant and the ordinary pauper, and it is too late now to seek a remedy in that direction.

We have therefore recommended, as the only possible solution, the transfer of the care and control of the vagrant from the Poor Law to the police authorities. If this recommendation is carried into effect, the Poor Law will in future only have to deal with the pauper who has a settlement. "It appears to have been a mere accident that Poor Law authorities, whose main duties are in relation to the poor settled in their own neighbourhood, should have been burdened with responsibility for the care of persons travelling from other and often distant districts." "The care of the vagrant may be regarded rather as an excrescence on the Poor Law than as an integral part of the system." (P. 35.)

The advantages to be derived from the transfer seemed to us far to outweigh any possible disadvantages. In the first place, in answer to the possible objection that it is a wrong thing to bring the *bona*

fide wayfarer into contact with the police, we point out that this class supplies but a very small proportion of the total number of vagrants. "In the opinion of the Workhouse Masters' Association the proportion is less than three per cent. The president of the Poor Law Unions Association puts it at two or three per cent. Mr W. Crooks, M.P., did not think it would be more than one per cent. in London." (P. 24.) And for this class of vagrant we make special provision, as we realised that it was of the highest importance that discrimination should be made between them and ordinary tramps.

Then the objection may be raised that we are interfering unjustifiably with the "liberty of the subject." But is there any person present here to-day who will venture to support such a contention? If I had thought this for a moment I should never have attached my signature to the Report, nor, I venture to say, would any other member of the Committee have done so. Either habitual vagrancy is an offence or it is not. I am one of those who think that if it is not an offence it should be made one; but we propose to deal mildly with the habitual vagrant, and to give him the chance of reforming his life. We do this by recommending the establishment of Labour Colonies. I cannot think of any other objections which could be raised to our proposals under this head. No doubt the police authorities will not like to have the care and control of vagrants cast upon them, but if it is clearly for the good of the whole community that they should undertake this duty, we do not imagine they will raise much difficulty to the transfer.

The advantages of our recommendation are much more obvious than any disadvantages.

Firstly, more uniformity of treatment can be secured. "Thus it is clear to us that the present system neither repels nor reforms the vagrant. It is agreed that the essential condition of success is

uniformity of administration, but the evidence is overwhelming to the effect that this object is not attained. In most cases the orders of the Local Government Board are evaded and in many absolutely disregarded." (P. 32.) Again, "The evidence also shows the practical impossibility of obtaining uniformity under the present system. It is clear that this must be the result when the administration is in the hands of over six hundred independent authorities who are actuated by no common principle except the desire to get rid of the vagrant as cheaply as possible." (P. 33.)

Even in London, where the casual wards are, for the purpose of detention, considered as one ward, no real uniformity has been secured; some Guardians do not detain, some give one task, some another, and some practically none at all. (Q. 10,445.)

If a popularly elected body choose to snap its fingers at the Central authority, what is the latter to do? It is, of course, powerless. On the other hand, if a paid official is found neglecting his prescribed duties, he can be at once dismissed, and replaced.

Secondly, the area of chargeability and maintenance can be enlarged, which is generally admitted to be essential.

It may be maintained that this can be done by the combination of Boards of Guardians for the purpose; but every experienced Guardian knows how difficult it is in practice to form any such combination which will work satisfactorily. "It would mean setting up a new authority for the purpose. To this there are many objections; much additional cost would be involved, and difficulties in administration would inevitably occur between the individual Board of Guardians and the joint body. Even if such combination did attain the end of getting a uniform administration of the wards in a county, there would be no means of obtaining a uniform system as between different counties." (P. 34.)

On the other hand, the standing joint committees in counties, and the watch committees of boroughs have the control of the police within their areas. These areas are large and populous, and the cost of the vagrant is therefore necessarily spread over a wide area.

Thirdly, our scheme will enable a considerable number of casual wards to be dispensed with.

When the Workhouses were established no regard was paid to the wants of the vagrant class. They were placed where they would be most convenient to the Guardians and to the settled poor. As the vagrant by slow degrees fastened himself on to the Poor Law, the casual ward was attached to the Workhouse, not because this was best suited to his wants, but because there was no other institution to which it could be attached. Casual wards should, as far as possible, be placed on the main roads of the country. We do not want to encourage vagrants to depart from these high roads. I have no doubt that cases of casual wards which are really not wanted will at once occur to many of the Guardians present at this Conference. The map of the district surrounding London published in the Appendix, illustrates this point. "The standing joint committee would be able to secure a much better arrangement of wards in the county than at present exists—for instance, by closing some that are unnecessary or by placing others where they are most wanted." (P. 36.)

The reduction in the number of casual wards will also be facilitated by the different treatment suggested for the "habitual vagrant."

Fourthly, the transfer to the police authorities has the advantage of bringing the whole vagrant population under a one and undivided control. The Report points out what a very large majority of this class are professionals: and further, "it must be remembered that habitual vagrants are often potential criminals,

and the police might be greatly helped in the prevention and detection of crime by having the whole class under their surveillance." (P. 36.) There is little to distinguish these from the criminal class of the population. If their crimes may be petty in most cases, they are crimes all the same, and are committed, like other crimes, as opportunity offers. The police will not be taken away, therefore, from their proper duties.

Now, as to the alleged hardship to the *bona fide* traveller. The Committee considered this point, and came to the conclusion there was nothing in the allegation. "In the first place, the evidence shows that the *bona fide* wayfarer supplies but a very small proportion of the total number of vagrants, and we have no reason to suppose that the police would treat this class in any way more harshly than is done under the present system. Indeed, we recommend a much more efficient system of relief for the work-seeker than exists at present, and we think he might properly look to the police for assistance and guidance on his way. Again, this detection and prevention of crime is only one—though no doubt the most conspicuous—of the multifarious duties performed by the police. For instance, the granting of pedlar licenses, the billeting of soldiers on the march, the regulation of traffic, the work done in connection with the licensing of public houses and with coroners' inquests, and the impounding of stray cattle, are a few examples of work which brings the police into contact with every class of the community, in addition to their functions in the general preservation of order. It may be mentioned, too, that in thirty-six counties the police now act as assistant relieving officers for vagrants, and orders for admission to the casual wards are obtained from them. Having given this matter careful consideration, we have come unanimously to the conclusion that no hardship whatever would be inflicted on the honest wayfarer by making it necessary for him to seek shelter at a place where the

police authority has control rather than at one controlled by the Poor Law authority. On the contrary, we consider that under the system we suggest a man may pass to his destination with a guarantee of character and a protection which no authority could furnish so efficiently as the police, while to the habitual vagrant the transfer to police supervision will no doubt be a deterrent." (P. 35.)

For the *bona fide* wayfarer, therefore, we suggest a system of "way-tickets" or "passes" similar to that which has answered so well in Switzerland. If a person of this class out of work has no other means of getting to a place where he has heard of work to be got except by taking to the road, he can apply to the nearest police station for a way-ticket, which will pass him to the place to which he wishes to go. But before the ticket is granted he will have to satisfy the police as to his *bona fides*, e.g., by "his having worked at some employment (other than a casual job) within a recent period, say three months, and that he has reasonable ground for expecting to get work at a certain place, and that he is likely to keep it, or that he has some other good ground for desiring to go to some particular place. A case that might be dealt with under the latter description is the sailor who has missed his ship and wishes to get to some other port." (P. 48.)

"This ticket should give the man's personal description, his usual trade, his reason for wanting to travel, and possibly his finger prints for the purpose of testing identity. It should be in the form of a book, with spaces on which should be stamped the name of each casual ward visited. We think that the duration of the book should be limited to a certain period, say one month. With this book the man could go to the casual ward and be entitled to a night's lodging, supper and breakfast, and after performing two hours' work to help to pay for his food and lodging, he should be free to leave the ward whenever he likes. The

name of the next ward in the direct line of his route, which he can reach that night, should be entered in the book, and if he arrived at that place he should be treated in the same manner. The book would thus be a record of the man's journey, and show clearly on the face of it whether he is genuinely in search of work." (Pp. 48, 49.)

As a further privilege, he is to be given on leaving the casual ward a ration of bread and cheese for his midday meal. Provision is made for enabling him to alter his route, when, while he is on his journey, he hears of work available at some other place to the right or left of the route marked on his way-ticket. (P. 49.)

As to the ordinary vagrant—the man without a ticket—no change is suggested in the existing regulations, except as to the nature of the task to be performed, and as to the provision of a midday meal. Thus he is to be detained for at least two nights in the casual ward, and, in case he has been admitted to the same ward more than once during the same month, for at least four nights. But the task of work to be performed is to be measured by time (nine hours), and to be of such a nature that it can be performed by anyone. Thus the expert will have no advantage over the novice as at present. (P. 41.) Two kinds of work are especially recommended for ordinary cases, viz., stone pounding and corn grinding. "The tasks are useful, they can be performed by anyone without previous experience, and are not costly in working. To those who are not physically able to perform the ordinary tasks, lighter work should be given, such as wood chopping, wood bundling, sack making, waste paper sorting, &c." But oakum picking is not entirely condemned, and the Committee were informed that it could now be utilised in large quantities for paper making. (*Ibid.*)

The advantages of a midday meal have been proved in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire, and we therefore

recommend that this practice should be universally applied, and that the ordinary vagrant should receive an order on his leaving the casual ward which would enable him to obtain his bread and cheese at some specified place (preferably a police station) in the direction towards which he states that he is travelling. It is hoped that when the public know that this midday meal is supplied they will cease from that thoughtless giving to the tramp, which is unfortunately beyond the powers of legislation or administrative action to prevent, for I think that you will all agree with the final words of the Report :—" Were it not for the indiscriminate doling-out there would be little necessity for casual wards or labour colonies for the vagrant, and idle vagrancy, ceasing to be a profitable profession, would come to an end." (P. 121.)

One of the greatest encouragements to vagrancy has been the harmful action of magistrates, whether stipendiaries or justices of the peace, in inflicting short sentences of imprisonment for vagrancy offences. The evidence convinced us that these short sentences were not only useless but mischievous. " As a rule, in the same county the sentences vary from three days to twenty-eight days for such offences as refusing to perform a task of work in a vagrant ward, or destroying clothing." " The sentences given by stipendiary magistrates appear to be as little governed by any fixed principles as those inflicted by the unpaid justices. In one town the local magistrates give a month for casual ward offences, while the stipendiary gives only seven days ; consequently, the Workhouse authorities, if possible, take proceedings on the days when the local magistrates are sitting." (P. 51.) " The same absence of uniformity appears to exist in the decisions of the magistrates sitting in the Metropolitan police courts." (*Ibid.*)

" In dealing with cases of begging, there seems to be even more variation on the part of the magistrates.

While some give fourteen days to a month, others discharge the man on his promising to leave the town. It is hardly necessary to say that, in places where no sentence is given, the police cease to bring cases before the magistrates, and the offence continues unchecked." (*Ibid.*)

We came to the conclusion that it would be very undesirable to interfere with the discretion of the magistrates in vagrancy offences by proposing that a minimum sentence of imprisonment should be fixed; but we have suggested that in all cases where a magistrate deems it expedient to give a sentence of less than fourteen days, the sentence should be for one day only. "A sentence for one day means that the prisoner is detained until the rising of the court, and then discharged. Under our proposal this sentence would be a conviction; the conviction would be recorded, and the offender would be warned by the court that on his second or third conviction he would be imprisoned for a considerable period, or (if our later recommendations are accepted) he could be committed for a still longer period of detention in a labour colony as an habitual vagrant. Procedure on these lines would avoid much of the expense and trouble caused by the present practice, and would be far more effectual in checking vagrancy offences, and we consider it a most necessary part of the scheme which we propose for dealing with habitual vagrants." (Pp. 53, 54.)

Mr Wharton, the Chairman of the Committee, has pointed out in a letter to the *Times* (10th March 1906) what a relief to the prisons and what a saving of expense would be brought about by the practical abolition of sentences of fourteen days and under. Thus, during 1904, out of 16,626 persons convicted for begging, no fewer than 13,831 had sentences of fourteen days and under, while out of 6,219 persons convicted for sleeping out, no fewer than 5,198 were similarly sentenced. The expense must run into thousands of pounds, and the

results are *nil*; for short sentences are no deterrent to the vagrant continuing his miserable line of life.

I have now pointed out the treatment that the Committee propose should be accorded to the *bona fide* wayfarer with a pass and to the ordinary vagrant without such pass. Everything possible is to be done to help the former on his way, and to prevent the risk of his joining the latter class. So long also as the latter commits no offences against the vagrancy law he will not be interfered with, but every deterrent to his pursuing a wandering life is to be placed in his way, by detention, by the task of work, and by the minimum fare necessary for life. There remains the larger class who bring themselves from time to time under the criminal law, *i.e.*, under the Vagrancy Act of 1824, and subsequent extending or amending Acts.* We call these persons habitual vagrants, and find that they are qualified to be treated as incorrigible rogues within the meaning of these Acts. (P. 58.) But the evidence showed us how few are now actually dealt with in this manner. "This seems to be chiefly due to the difficulty of identifying the man and proving his previous convictions. By moving into another district the vagrant practically escapes all chance of identification, and is able to pose as a first offender. Even in cases where the previous convictions of the vagrant are known, there is often a reluctance on the part of the magistrates to avail themselves of the powers conferred on them." (P. 58.) The reason for this reluctance may well be because "magistrates feel that prison under present conditions is not the right place for this class of offenders, and we are inclined to think that if the detention were to be undergone in some other form of institution, the disinclination to put the Act in force would be considerably lessened." (P. 59.) "The absolute necessity of some other mode of dealing with persons of this class is fully shown by the

* A list of these Acts is set out in Appendix I. of the Report.

evidence ; prison, as we have already pointed out, is no deterrent to them, and they come up again and again for sentence with surprising regularity." (*Ibid.*) "The evidence we have received is overwhelmingly in favour of increased power of detention for habitual vagrants." (*Ibid.*) Further, we consider that he should as far as possible be treated not as a criminal, but as a person requiring detention on account of his mode of life. "For this purpose we propose that a class of habitual vagrants should be defined by statute, and that this class should include any person who has been three or more times convicted, during a period of, say, twelve months, of certain offences now coming under the Vagrancy Act, viz., sleeping out, begging, refusing to perform a task in casual wards, or refusing or neglecting to maintain himself so that he becomes chargeable to the poor rate." (P. 59.)* No new offence is created, but a new punishment. This new punishment is committal to a labour colony for a term of not less than six months, or more than three years. (P. 76.) But, although we are strongly of opinion that the labour colony and not the prison is the proper place of detention for these persons, we do not propose that the present procedure should be abrogated. It might be useful in some cases, and will certainly be so, until the colony system is fully carried out.

As the habitual vagrant, as proposed to be defined, is punishable as an "incorrigible rogue" under the Vagrancy Acts, the sentence to detention in a labour colony can only be made by quarter sessions, but we recommend that where the interval between the committal by the magistrates at petty sessions and the next ensuing quarter sessions is sufficiently long (the interval may be three months), the committal should

* "Under this proposal a means is provided of enabling the Poor Law authorities to deal with the class of 'ins-and-outs' who now cause considerable trouble in Workhouse administration." (P. 59.)

be to the labour colony rather than to the prison, and that where the interval is only a short one the police authority should arrange for the offender being sent temporarily to some casual ward under their control, if proper arrangements can be made for his reception. (P. 60.)

I may mention here one of the great advantages of placing the control of vagrants under the police, viz., the greater facility for the detention of the habitual vagrant and for the detection of crime generally. Thus we propose that after each conviction for a vagrancy offence the finger prints of the offender should be taken, and the result sent to a central office. There is no practical difficulty about this proposal. At present, in the Habitual Criminal Registry at New Scotland Yard, accurate records are kept of over 70,000 persons, and we were informed that it would be possible in a similar manner to keep a record of all persons convicted of vagrancy offences. (P. 60.)

My paper will extend to an inordinate length if I go fully into the description of the labour colony which we propose; and, besides, these colonies have been so often explained and discussed at Poor Law Conferences that you are well acquainted with their nature. But before giving a mere outline of our suggestions, I would warn you not to expect too much from them. Their reforming influence is very small. Thus at Merxplas, in Belgium, as soon as one period of detention is over, the colonist is generally sent back to the colony for another term. Even at Hadleigh (the Salvation Army Colony), where reforming influences are as strong as they can be, the percentage of persons who can be said to have been reformed is very small.

But what labour colonies accomplish is this. They clear the streets of beggars and loafers, they make these people work while in the colony, and they prevent them from doing harm to the general public during their term of detention, and from raising up

children to succeed them. (Pp. 72, 73.) I am sorry that the Committee were not able to defend the labour colonies on any higher ground, but it seemed to them quite sufficient ground for recommending the establishment of labour colonies as a very desirable addition to the existing system. "There is a consensus of opinion that the evil resulting from the present conditions is so great that it is worth while going to the trouble and expense of making the experiment. We consider that the need of some power of keeping habitual vagrants in detention for long periods is clearly proved, and in view of the impossibility of making a prison serve the purpose, we feel we have no alternative but to recommend that compulsory labour colonies should be established in this country. Even if they are not successful in achieving greater reformatory effects than the existing labour colonies abroad, we think that at least they may clear the streets of the habitual vagrant and loafer, may make him lead a more useful life during his detention, and may offer a real deterrent to those starting on a life of vagrancy." (Pp. 73, 74.)

For reasons which are set out fully on pages 74 to 76 of the Report, we came to the conclusion that labour colonies, except in one instance, should not be provided directly by the State. Following the precedent of inebriate reformatories, we think that the initiative should be left to private or local bodies. We wish the colonies to be looked upon more as industrial or reformatory schools for adults rather than as prisons. "Moreover it should not be forgotten that prior to 1877 local prisons were in the hands of local bodies." (P. 75.) But the colony must be certified by the Secretary of State, be managed in accordance with regulations issued by him, and be subject to official inspection. "We think generally that it should be for the council of a county or county borough to make arrangements for the provision of a labour colony to which habitual vagrants committed from the area

might be sent. This they might do either by contributing towards the maintenance of a certified labour colony established by the council of some other county or county borough or by a philanthropic body, or by establishing a labour colony themselves. *We do not contemplate that there should be a separate colony for each county.*" (P. 76.)

Considering the relief which the proposed colonies will afford to the prisons, it is only fair that the State should make a direct contribution to their cost. We suggest that this contribution should be one-half of the cost of maintenance of each colonist. When the colony is under private management, the other half of this cost is to be paid by the local authority from whose area the colonist is committed. If a local authority itself manage the colony, it will be responsible for the payment of this half for the colonists coming from its area. "The contribution, however, should not be so large as to cover the gross cost of maintenance; for instance, a margin should be left to be made up by the colonist's labour; this would be an inducement to the authorities of the institution to keep the men fully employed, and to get the best work out of them." (P. 77.)

As to the size of the colonies, we came to the conclusion that the number of inmates should not exceed 500. With a larger number the difficulties of control, management, and classification would be very great. Smaller colonies would be costly, and, besides, it did not seem to us desirable that they should be multiplied. (P. 78.)

The work to be done in the colony must not be limited to agriculture. "On wet days throughout the year, in frosty weather, and, indeed, during a great part of the winter, but little farm work could be carried on. Again, some of the colonists would be quite unfitted for work of this character; and lastly, there would be difficulty in disposing of the surplus agricultural produce without affecting outside industries." (P. 80.)

There must, therefore, be indoor industries. The colony should be, as far as possible, self-supporting ; that is, "it should erect its own buildings, and produce all the things it requires. If the work it does is not to be allowed to conflict with outside industries, it seems only fair that outside industries should not be allowed to conflict with its own industries. There is no reason why the various colonies should not supply each other with the commodities which each one was best fitted to produce. For instance, one colony, on account of the soil, might be able to make bricks cheaply, and in sufficient quantities for all the other colonies. Again, proximity to a stream might enable another colony to establish mills of various kinds, and it might be possible to start new industries which would not interfere with existing interests. This was done at Merxplas, where the button-making industry was started for the first time in Belgium. Mr Preston-Thomas, in his evidence, suggested the making of straw cases for wine bottles as a useful occupation for men who were not able-bodied, which would affect no English industry ; and no doubt others could be discovered. For instance, the sorting of rag and paper from refuse heaps would be a remunerative occupation. Possibly certain goods required by the Government, such as boots for the army, might be made in labour colonies. Care must be taken that when goods are produced by a colony for sale, the independent producer is not undersold. It is important that industries of a useful kind should be established in the colony so that the work might be an encouragement to the colonists, and that there might be work for all. Land reclamation and the erection of buildings would provide a useful occupation at first, but after this had been accomplished there would be the greater necessity for other industries." (P. 81.)

The colonists can be encouraged to good conduct in the colony by earning money for their work (a portion to be accumulated for them on discharge, and

a portion to be handed over to them weekly to spend at the canteen of the colony in the purchase of extra articles of food, tobacco, &c.); by a better dietary; by the possibility of discharge before the full term of sentence expires; and in other ways. This system works well at Merxplas, and there is no reason why it should not work well here. We do not want written over the gates of a colony, "All hope abandon ye who enter here." The knowledge that only by industry and good behaviour can any privilege be obtained will hardly fail to be beneficial. (P. 77.)

We estimate that the *net* cost of food, clothing, and maintenance in the colony should not exceed 4s. weekly, or £5. 8s. per year for each colonist. "In considering the question it is necessary to remember that at present the habitual vagrant, whether as beggar or as inmate of casual wards or prison, is a continual source of expense to the community. It is at least possible that the scheme which we propose for the retention of this class may be found on the whole less costly than the existing system." (P. 81.) It may be necessary to have at least one labour colony under the *direct* control of the State, "for it will no doubt be found that certain of the habitual vagrants will not be amenable to the discipline of the ordinary labour colonies, or from their repeated escapes and recommittals will need a more severe treatment." This colony would be an entirely penal type, possessing no attractions over the ordinary colonies, either in diet or other respects. (P. 82.)

For female and child vagrants we suggest a different form of treatment. It is a gratifying circumstance that they should be comparatively so few in number. Out of 9,768 vagrants relieved in casual wards on the 1st January 1905, only 887 were women (9 per cent. of the total number), and 188 children under 16 (2 per cent. of the total number). We suggest that both classes should be relieved in the

Workhouse, for the very forcible reasons given in the Report. Further, the probability is very strong that if the men were removed, women and children will soon disappear from the roads. For the habitual female vagrant probably one or two labour colonies would amply suffice, while the children of both male and female habitual vagrants can be sent to industrial schools or dealt with in such other way as may be thought best for them.

Boards of Guardians have of course the power to adopt these children under the Act of 1899, but they rarely use this power, because they are unwilling to throw upon the local rates the burden of the maintenance and education of children who are not settled in their Unions, nor go to the trouble and expense which would be involved in an attempt to ascertain their place of settlement. We recommend, therefore, that County Councils should be empowered in proper cases to make a contribution from the county rates towards the cost of the maintenance of vagrant children adopted by the Guardians.

There is another class of vagrant, for whom a labour colony would be useless, and who require special treatment. These are described in the Report as "vagrants wandering to their own hurt." For this class, the Workhouse is undoubtedly the best place, and we suggest that power might be given for their compulsory detention there. But the proposal means a drastic alteration of the Poor Law for their benefit, and we have consequently left it to the Poor Law Commission to deal with, along with the cognate question of the compulsory removal of certain of the settled poor to the Workhouse. Every Guardian knows these difficult cases, for whom every one is agreed that the Workhouse is the proper place, but who cannot be removed there without their consent, and who have not the intelligence to know what is best for them.

The Report condemns wholesale the system of free shelters and free feeding, and we hope that, if our recommendations are carried out, there will no longer be any excuse for continuance of these demoralising charitable agencies. We sum up the evil they do as follows (p. 91):—

1. They encourage vagrancy by making it possible for men to lead an idle life.
2. They attract vagrants into the towns and render the question of unemployment more difficult to deal with.
3. They demoralise the recipients, and lower their standard of living; and
4. They are a source of positive danger to the community.

Our Report winds up with a condemnation of the giving of alms to vagrants. In Switzerland such almsgiving is punishable by law, and it is a fact that there are very few tramps and beggars in that country. Vagrancy is undoubtedly mainly supported by this indiscriminate almsgiving, for the tramp could not exist without it. We believe that if our recommendations are carried into effect, and the public learn that sufficient provision has been made for the bodily wants of all wayfarers, whether *bona fide* or not, every excuse for the practice will be removed.

My paper has already extended to such a length that I must now conclude. The Report contains chapters on the dietaries of labour colonies and casual wards (we hope the prison will no longer be more attractive to the vagrant than the casual ward); on common lodging-houses (which we suggest should be brought more under the control and inspection of the police and of local authorities, especially as to sanitary regulations being enforced); and on the spread of smallpox by vagrants. As to this last very important matter, we say, "By a stricter enforcement of the existing law as regards common lodging-houses and casual

wards, and, in times of epidemics, by more general action of a formal and informal kind, such as we have referred to, much may be done by way of preventing infection. We think also that provision might be made for securing better notification of cases of smallpox occurring in common lodging-houses and casual wards. It seems to us that reform in these directions, coupled with the adoption of the general scheme we have suggested for dealing with vagrants, should suffice to secure to the community a more effective and uniform protection than has hitherto existed against tramp-borne disease, and in particular should afford a more satisfactory safeguard against the spread of smallpox by vagrants among persons inadequately protected by vaccination." (P. 61.)

I now leave the Report to discussion by the Conference. For the first time I think a real attempt has been made to distinguish between the *bona fide* wayfarer and the ordinary vagrant, and to give them differential treatment. We cannot hope to stop vagrancy entirely—the vagrant spirit is far too strong in every Englishman—but we can regulate it, and do something towards relieving a long-suffering public from the importunities (often criminal in character) of those vagrants who are professional beggars and nothing else.

The Hon. Secretary stated that he had received a paper on the Vagrancy question from Sir Richard Temple, Bart., of Kempsey, Worcestershire, which, if it was the wish of the Conference, he would read. The Conference assented, and the following paper was then read:—

The Report of the Vagrancy Committee shows that vagrancy is still and has always been a mode of life that is dangerous to the public, and many attempts have been made to discourage it, and that failure in this has been due to want of uniformity in adminis-

trating the laws, regulations, and orders that have from time to time been issued. The existing system for repressing vagrancy makes no attempt at reforming the vagrant, while experience shows that it is only in the direction of reform that any permanent good can be hoped for. The Report also points out that the root trouble of the evil of vagrancy is "indiscriminate dole-giving." This is a trouble that has to be taken into account, as it cannot be officially suppressed, and as long as it lasts vagrancy will continue to be a mode of life among a certain class of the population.

The recommendations in the Report, therefore, aim at providing a Vagrancy Law that will ensure uniformity in the treatment of vagrants, and labour colonies as a means of reforming them.

As a means of ensuring uniformity of treatment, the Report proposes to place the casual wards under the police, and common lodging-houses, shelters, and free food distributions under the local authorities; as a means of discouraging habitual vagrancy it proposes to abolish short sentences and to institute labour colonies. It also makes special recommendations for the treatment of pedlars, women, and children. Where the vagrant may be a *bona fide* seeker of work, the Report provides a system of way-tickets, under police control.

I would point out that the richer classes have the means, and the knowledge to apply those means, of protecting themselves against predatory vagrants. It is the poorer classes and the country cottager to whom they are especially a danger and a source of fear. This consideration makes it all the more necessary, to my mind, to attempt effectual measures to restrict vagrancy.

I have had a long experience in dealing with convicts on a very large scale, and I have formed a strong opinion that, in dealing with such a predatory

class as the habitual vagrants, the underlying principles should be :—

1. Protection of the public rather than punishment of the individual.
2. Confinement as the best means of protection.
3. Continuance of confinement until there are signs of reform.

My experience is that reform takes a very long time, and I doubt if the maximum period of confinement recommended is sufficient to induce in an habitual vagrant *a habit of earning his living by steady work. It is the newly acquired habit that constitutes reform, not temporary good resolutions or desires.*

I presume that the present desire is to induce the County Councils and such bodies to move for the passing of a new Vagrancy Act embodying the principles of the Committee's Report, and if that, or any other method of giving effect to it, is adopted by the Conference mentioned, I shall be glad to help so far as I can. I should also be glad to assist in devising means for publishing everywhere that it is "dole-giving" that is the cause of vagrancy.

In the letter to me a remark is made that the inmates of Workhouses, Labour Colonies, &c., might be put to a form of labour that would tend to supply the means of their support. This is an old controversy. The proposal assists the ratepayer, but it is supposed to interfere with the supplying trades, which have always been very loud in their complaints. I have, however, seen the system of making convicts supply their own wants, so far as possible, act very well in practice, in a manner not necessarily detrimental to the trade of the country.

DISCUSSION.

Mr W. DAVIS (West Bromwich) said Germany had a summary way of dealing with vagrants, but he did not feel he would like to see the system tried in this country. They had a tank, in which they put the vagrant. In the tank there was a pump and an inflow of water; the vagrant had either to pump or drown. (Laughter.)

Mr C. J. BLAGG: Hot or cold water?

Mr DAVIS: Cold, I believe. Wherever the tank is established it is said the vagrant passes by.

Mr G. M. WHITE (Cirencester) thought the paper the most sensible he had ever listened to, and he hoped the Conference would give a hearty support to the general recommendations contained therein, and urge the importance of early legislation on the subject. In his Union vagrancy was the most troublesome question they had to deal with, and in spite of all their efforts it was going from bad to worse. Boards of Guardians everywhere were indebted to the Departmental Committee for their well-thought out and eminently practical suggestions. He agreed that labour colonies should not be altogether agricultural, which was not a very profitable industry at the present time. Wood-chopping had been followed in his Union with very great success. Labour colonies had much to recommend them, and could be profitably worked without interference with anybody's business.

Rev. G. W. JOHNSON (Wolverhampton) remarked that very little had been said in the paper and in the recommendations about the children, the reason probably being that there were so few. As Chairman of the Cottage Homes at Wolverhampton he could see danger ahead if the children of vagrants were to be placed in Cottage Homes and mix with the children there. (Hear, hear.) Guardians well knew of the difficulties they had to contend with as regarded the "ins-and-outs," but children of twelve or thirteen years of age, who had been taken all over the country, and who had stayed in lodging-houses, would know a great deal more than Guardians would like the present inmates of the Cottage Homes to know. He would like to know what Sir William Chance suggested in regard to separate treatment for the children of vagrants. The suggestion that *bona fide* working men, whose misfortune it was for the time being to have to go on the road in search of work, should be required to have their finger prints taken, did not appeal to him. (Hear, hear.) Surely some other method of identification could be adopted without putting a genuine working man in the same class as a criminal. The classification of vagrants would present difficulties. At Wolverhampton they had not adopted the cold-water treatment, but they had adopted the hot-water system, and vagrants disliked one as much as the other. They had also adopted the cell system with marked success. The dormitory system was a mistake. It provided clubs for vagrants, wherein they could meet for conversation, exchange tobacco, and relate their experiences.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE said he would at once reply on the point with regard to the children, so that the Conference might be under no misapprehension. The children of habitual vagrants would be sent, not to the Guardians, but to industrial schools. (Hear, hear.) The whole feeling of the Conference was to protect the children now under the care of Guardians from coming into contact with the children of parents whose lives had been spent on the roads.

Mr A. TAYLOR (Shipston-on-Stour) related how he dressed as a tramp and went about the country with vagrants in order to learn something of their methods and habits. He found it was a common practice to carry tools, as if looking for work, and to collect quantities of bread, which was sold at the lodging-houses for tobacco and beer. He learnt the signs vagrants used for the purpose of conveying information to each other as to the places where help was or was not given, and said that men who never did a stroke of work carried a hammer and a chisel, and by posing as work-seekers reaped a rich harvest. In country districts a gift of half-a-crown was not at all uncommon. It was the speciality of some tramps to prey upon cottagers, who were always sympathetic.

Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Clerk, Bristol Union) said the presence of Sir William Chance upon the Departmental Committee gave confidence to Poor Law administrators that the matters at issue would be thoroughly discussed, and a comprehensive report presented. The Report of the Committee showed strong common sense, and an earnest desire to improve the methods of dealing with a most difficult class of persons, without throwing much additional expense on the rate-payers. A year ago he had the pleasure of reading before the West Midland Conference a paper on the subject of Vagrancy and Labour Colonies, in which he suggested that the honest seeker after work should be dealt with as a separate class, and helped by the aid of way-tickets, and that labour colonies should be established by the State for habitual casuals. The Departmental Committee recommended the transfer of the care and control of habitual vagrants from the Guardians to the police, one of their reasons for doing so being that it would ensure uniformity of treatment. He thoroughly agreed with that. One of his contentions a year ago was that vagrancy was a national question, and that the entire cost of dealing with it should be borne by the State. (Hear, hear.) The effect of the transfer of control to the police would be to spread the charge in most cases over larger areas, but he did not think the improvement went far enough. The charge would fall upon 150 or 160 areas as against 650 now. Some districts would experience no change. In Bristol, instead of the expense of casuals coming from the poor rate, it would fall upon the borough expenditure and be paid by exactly the same ratepayers. The Committee recommended that no additional grant should be made for the maintenance of casuals, therefore the local rates would gain nothing from the change. A scheme which would give greater satisfaction to Guardians would be one

which provided that the cost of casuals who did not belong to any locality should be paid by the State. The proposed handing over of casual wards to the police, and the closing of many of them, would be a hardship at times, and would profit one Union at the expense of another. The only objection to the proposed treatment of honest work-seekers was that they would continue to resort to the casual wards, and would be, at any rate for a time, bound to come into contact with habitual casuals. In his opinion a very small proportion of habitual casuals would be sent to labour colonies, at any rate for a time. He agreed that such colonies should be established, but thought there would be a difficulty in one county establishing a colony where brickmaking was followed, and another county a colony where bootmaking might be carried on. The only solution was for colonies to be established and maintained by the State. (Hear, hear.) County Councils would not readily face the question of establishing such colonies, if they had to bear the whole cost. The Committee recommended that one-half the cost of maintenance should be paid by the State, but he did not know whether the recommendation covered half the cost of establishing as well as maintaining. If it did not, the contribution of the State would be inadequate. For a time he thought three or four labour colonies would be all that the country would need, and their entire cost should be a State matter. Everybody would agree that the children should be entirely removed from the vagrant class, and the best place for them was the industrial school.

Mr F. W. B. CRIPPS (Cirencester), as one who was responsible at present for the working of the way-ticket system in Gloucestershire, was gratified at the general approval the system had received from the Departmental Committee, who had entirely endorsed what had been the ground-work of the system, *i.e.*, to take away all reasons for giving indiscriminate charity, which was the whole cause of vagrancy. To deal properly and even generously with the *bona fide* seeker after work would do away with the need of indiscriminate charity. The public would soon get to know that all men with a right to be on the road were being cared for, and that there was no cause for them to beg. In towns people were so close together that they had nothing to fear from vagrants, but in country districts, where there were but few houses, the tramp was regarded as a terror, and men, when going to work, had to lock up their wives and children to protect them from vagrants. Mr Simpson had drawn attention to the cost of dealing with vagrants. Was it not an ideal state of things to ask the State to pay the whole cost of dealing with tramps? If the nation paid everything, there might possibly be extravagance in management. If the care of vagrants could be transferred to the police, Guardians would experience very great relief. Small Unions especially would benefit, as they had not the accommodation for properly dealing with vagrants. He thought the deterrent system wrong. In Gloucestershire, although the number of tramps had gone up enormously, the number who used

the lodging-houses had decreased, whilst the number who used the casual wards had doubled in the last three years. The reason for this was that there was now a number of young tramps on the road, and these, under a proper system, might be reclaimed.

Mr G. WILSON (Coventry) said there was a simple solution of the vagrancy question, if it could be effected: the stoppage of almsgiving. (Hear, hear.) If Guardians throughout the country would recommend the Government to pass a measure making it an offence to give alms, as had been done in Switzerland, vagrancy would soon cease.

Mrs WALTER BROWNE (Worcester) asked for further information in regard to women vagrants. If they were to be admitted to the Workhouse with their children much harm would be done the ordinary inmates. In many cases it would be a hardship to give up the tramp wards, as they could be utilised in various ways for Poor Law work.

Mr A. RAYNOR (Nuneaton) said that for many years the tramp pest was so great in his Union that the Guardians did not know what to do. With a view to learning the methods of other Unions, and the habits of the tramps themselves, he had been with them in various casual wards, and had performed all the ordinary work tasks. In this way he acquired valuable information with regard to tramp life. There were three distinct classes of tramps—the professional or habitual, who had never done honest work and never intended to. He would put these at two in every twelve. Another class consisted of those who had by vice or drunkenness wrecked their lives at the age of about fifty, and failing to retain employment took to the road, doing odd jobs on one or two days in the week. This class formed a large majority of those upon the road. The honest seekers for work were but few in number. His Union had adopted the system of wood sawing and chopping, which had made a profit of over 10s. per week, and had reduced the number of tramps by over 50 per cent.

Mrs JAMES (Warwick) was in the fullest possible sympathy with the whole of the paper. They should get entirely rid of the present system of dealing with vagrancy, and begin a new era, especially should they aim at stopping the almsgiving of a soft-hearted public. In her own parish she was reckoned a most atrocious woman, because she allowed every class of tramp to pass her door without being helped. As givers of alms indiscriminately women were the greatest culprits. A vagrant had only to arm himself with a Moody and Sankey hymn book, and in a whining tone drone out "Where is my wandering boy to-night?" for all the women to turn out and weep and give him their last penny. (Laughter.) She related an instance of a tramp who was seen to hide something in a drain. When he had gone, two men examined the drain and found £4. 10s., which they took and went on their way rejoicing. When she heard of the matter she rejoiced too. (Laughter.) She was strongly in favour of putting the children under better circumstances but not with letting the tramps go free. It would be no good to take the children without their parents.

Mr J. E. Cox (Rugby) thought the treatment suggested for *bona*

fide working men excellent, but asked what such men were to do when they had reached their centres without having found work. If vagrants could be taken off the road, and their children taken from them, vagrancy would soon die a natural death. Labour bureaux in connection with labour colonies would be extremely valuable.

Mr J. TAYLOR (Dudley) regarded it as an injustice to honest men that they should be required to have their finger prints taken on the same system as criminals. As one who had been on tramp in search of work, and had to seek relief in other Unions than his own, he would have resented such treatment. The ranks of habitual vagrants were largely recruited from people who began with an honest intention to find work, but who did not get it, and gradually drifted into the ranks of vagrancy. He had visited Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and other countries, and found that men honestly looking for work were treated very much better than in this country. Such travellers were given a certain amount of money, and were accommodated in Homes. In this country vagrancy was treated more as something criminal than as a disease. If every person who did no work was to be treated as a criminal, what a large number of criminals there would be. If men could be put for about twelve months in a labour colony they could learn some industry and go out with a good character. On behalf of the working classes he could say that they wanted to save these people. He instanced a labour colony in Germany, from which forty-five out of every fifty inmates were drafted into independent employment.

Colonel CLOWES (Weobley) gave instances of dwellers in country districts who were bullied into assisting tramps. The houses being at some distance from each other, the occupiers were obliged as a matter of self-defence to give to tramps in order to get rid of them.

Mr WHITFIELD (Thornbury) said the aim of his Union was to help as much as possible the work-seeker, by liberating him early in the morning, and so giving him the best chance of obtaining work.

Lieut.-General PHELPS (King's Norton) said the Committee's Report, if acted upon, would create a new criminal, or semi-criminal—the vagrant. To transfer the casual wards to the police would make the inmates *prima facie* criminals. It had been found at Kings Norton that the honest work-seekers were about 20 per cent., instead of the 3 per cent. mentioned in the Committee's Report. The "man in the street" would say that this legislation was not directed against the vagrant but against the pauper vagrant. If, 1900 years ago, this proposed law had been in force, the Apostles would have been sent to a labour colony, with the exception of St Paul, who was a tent-maker. He could not see how indiscriminate dole-giving was to be prevented. To send people to gaol for giving alms would not be tolerated in this country. The fact that tramps were provided with food ought to prevent almsgiving. Instead of transferring this matter to the police, who would be greatly burdened with it, why not refer it to the Educational Department. ("Oh.") The man who became a tramp was the

man who had no trade in his fingers. If he was taught a trade he would have no need to go on tramp, so it really was an educational matter.

Mr C. H. DEAVIN (Gloucester) moved, "That this Conference notes with much satisfaction the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, and urges the Government to embody the recommendations in a Bill, and pass the same into law at an early date."

Mr Wm. BROWN (Aston), in seconding, pointed out that Guardians, under the Act of 1899, had power to deal with the children of vagrants.

Mr F. HARRISON (Wolverhampton) and Mr J. J. SIMPSON (Bristol) suggested that the motion should be made stronger by insisting upon the labour colonies being established and maintained by the State.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE then replied on the discussion, and said he had been much helped by some of the criticisms. With regard to finger prints, the Committee's Report said, "and possibly" they might be taken. This showed that the Committee were doubtful whether it would be advisable to take finger prints in these particular cases. Personally, he did not consider it would be necessary. Mr Simpson's criticisms had been interesting and important. On the question of State contributions to labour colonies, it might be that the Committee had not gone far enough, but the whole thing would be an experiment. It was important that there should be powers to detain vagrants. The Salvation Army had been anxious for years to detain people in their colony at Hadleigh for a longer time. The want of success had been due to the fact that the inmates were not there for a sufficient time. He did not think it would be well to commit the State to the cost of labour colonies until it was seen they were going to be a success. He did not know any country where the State paid the whole cost of such colonies. He thought the Salvation Army, the Church Army, and agencies of the kind would help in this matter, and with the aid of voluntary contributions set up three or four labour colonies as an experiment. As regarded the punishment of almsgivers, however desirable that might be, he doubted its expediency in this country. The Departmental Committee had made a serious effort to grapple with this important question. They might have gone wrong in certain details, but the question for the Conference was whether, broadly, the recommendations of the Committee were right, that the care and control of vagrants should pass from the Poor Law to the police.

The resolution proposed by Mr Deavin was then put and unanimously agreed to. It was resolved that copies should be sent to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Local Government Board.

The Conference closed with votes of thanks to the readers of papers, to Sir William Chance and Mr Blagg for services in the chair, and Mr Lloyd-Baker, jun., and Miss Lloyd-Baker for the efficient manner in which they had discharged the secretarial duties.

APPENDIX

TO THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

**PAUPERISM OF THE WEST MIDLAND COUNTIES ON
1ST JANUARY 1900 AND 1ST JANUARY 1905 (EXCLUDING
LUNATICS IN COUNTY AND BOROUGH ASYLUMS, REGISTERED
HOSPITALS, AND LICENSED HOUSES, AND ALSO CASUAL
PAUPERS).**

I. WHOLE OF WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
	3,679,594	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	22,202	62,704	84,906	23.0
1905 . .	—	26,294	71,477	97,771	26.5

II. COUNTIES IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

Gloucester .	648,627	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	4,296	13,769	18,065	27.8
1905 .	—	4,863	13,965	18,828	29.0
Hereford .	112,549	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	716	3,350	4,066	36.1
1905 .	—	764	3,235	3,999	35.5
Salop .	259,088	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	1,730	3,330	5,060	19.5
1905 .	—	1,929	3,681	5,610	22.0
Stafford .	1,251,910	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	6,541	24,860	31,401	24.9
1905 .	—	8,273	30,502	38,775	30.9
Worcester .	500,819	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	2,654	8,755	11,409	22.8
1905 .	—	3,103	9,776	12,879	25.7
Warwick .	906,601	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	6,165	8,640	14,805	16.3
1905 .	—	7,362	10,318	17,680	19.5

* There has been a considerable increase of population in the towns since the last census, so that the ratios of paupers to population are in these towns smaller than stated for the 1st January 1905.

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

1. *Three Unions with over 200,000 Population.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Bristol . .	339,042	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	2,410	5,938	8,348	24.6
1905 . .	—	2,777	6,594	9,371	27.9
Birmingham .	245,206	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	3,158	1,080	4,238	17.2
1905 . .	—	3,504	1,683	5,187	21.1
Aston . .	312,263	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	1,402	1,418	2,820	9.0
1905 . .	—	1,869	2,211	4,080	13.0

2. *Five Unions with from 150,000 to 200,000 Population.*

King's Norton	187,087	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	692	1,558	2,250	12.0
1905 . .	—	925	2,524	3,449	18.4
West Bromwich	172,189	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	859	2,777	3,636	21.1
1905 . .	—	1,035	3,036	4,071	23.6
Stoke - upon - Trent . .	155,422	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	901	2,758	3,659	23.5
1905 . .	—	1,345	4,010	5,355	34.4
Wolverhampton	154,591	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	1,235	3,753	4,988	32.2
1905 . .	—	1,485	3,971	5,456	35.3
Dudley . .	152,127	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	703	5,424	6,127	42.7
1905 . .	—	750	4,512	5,262	34.6

3. *Four Unions with from 90,000 to 120,000 Population.*

Walsall . .	118,607	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	503	2,112	2,615	13.8
1905 . .	—	640	4,540	5,180	26.9

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*3. *Four Unions with from 90,000 to 120,000 Population—continued.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Wolstanton and Burslem .	99,545	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	329	1,844	2,173	21.8
1905 .	—	568	2,652	3,220	32.3
Burton - upon - Trent .	92,814	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	413	1,471	1,884	20.2
1905 .	—	579	1,631	2,210	23.9
Stourbridge .	92,482	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	482	1,659	2,141	23.1
1905 .	—	538	1,979	2,517	27.2

4. *Twelve Unions with from 40,000 to 80,000 Population.*

Coventry .	70,296	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	475	549	1,024	14.5
1905 .	—	495	690	1,185	16.7
Gloucester .	58,734	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	230	1,282	1,512	25.7
1905 .	—	339	1,033	1,372	23.3
Cheltenham .	57,882	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	401	1,094	1,495	25.8
1905 .	—	438	1,100	1,538	26.5
Warwick .	54,906	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	290	997	1,287	23.4
1905 .	—	358	939	1,297	23.4
Atcham .	49,440	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	424	154	578	11.7
1905 .	—	496	109	607	12.2
Solihull .	48,618	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	111	389	500	10.2
1905 .	—	172	573	745	15.3
Worcester .	47,793	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	404	870	1,274	26.6
1905 .	—	448	933	1,381	28.8

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*4. *Twelve Unions with from 40,000 to 80,000 Population—continued.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Cannock .	47,636	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	258	814	1,072	22.5
1905 .	—	277	928	1,205	25.3
Lichfield .	42,542	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	229	684	913	21.4
1905 .	—	283	772	1,055	24.8
Leek .	41,867	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	182	654	836	20.0
1905 .	—	152	891	1,043	24.9
Kidderminster .	40,769	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	378	1,001	1,379	33.8
1905 .	—	414	1,015	1,429	35.0
Newcastle - under-Lyme	40,345	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	275	499	774	19.1
1905 .	—	341	740	1,081	26.8

5. *Nine Unions with from 25,000 to 40,000 Population.*

Stroud .	39,974	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	240	711	951	23.8
1905 .	—	287	819	1,106	27.7
Bromsgrove .	35,630	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	163	894	1,057	29.6
1905 .	—	166	702	868	24.3
Hereford .	34,653	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	203	796	999	28.8
1905 .	—	199	794	993	28.8
Rugby .	34,328	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	123	587	710	20.6
1905 .	—	152	683	835	24.3
Stafford .	31,302	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	269	598	867	27.7
1905 .	—	312	774	1,086	34.7

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*5. *Nine Unions with from 25,000 to 40,000 Population—continued.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Upton-upon-Severn .	29,316	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	109	596	705	24.0
1905 .	—	166	781	947	32.3
Oswestry .	28,262	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	232	359	591	20.9
1905 .	—	229	477	706	24.9
Nuneaton .	28,120	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	77	469	546	19.4
1905 .	—	101	542	643	22.6
Wellington .	25,854	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	156	491	647	25.0
1905 .	—	179	542	721	27.9

6. *Nineteen Unions with from 15,000 to 25,000 Population.*

Tamworth .	24,667	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	72	636	708	28.7
1905 .	—	121	460	581	23.5
Chendale .	24,657	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	77	531	608	24.6
1905 .	—	118	587	705	28.6
Madeley .	23,845	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	135	383	518	21.7
1905 .	—	159	627	786	32.9
Westbury-on-Severn .	22,864	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	158	679	837	36.6
1905 .	—	162	650	812	35.5
Chipping Sodbury .	22,104	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	75	528	603	27.3
1905 .	—	86	700	786	35.5
Alcester .	20,979	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	113	572	685	32.6
1905 .	—	124	585	709	33.7

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*6. *Nineteen Unions with from 15,000 to 25,000 Population—contd.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Stratford-on-Avon .	20,842	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	172	577	749	36.2
1905 .	—	176	572	748	36.2
Stone .	19,639	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	103	398	501	25.5
1905 .	—	113	372	485	24.7
Cirencester .	19,620	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	137	610	747	38.0
1905 .	—	162	540	702	35.7
Thornbury .	18,487	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	102	419	521	28.1
1905 .	—	129	475	604	32.6
Droitwich .	18,374	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	79	741	820	44.6
1905 .	—	61	582	643	35.0
Ludlow .	18,373	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	118	328	446	24.1
1905 .	—	131	346	477	25.9
Seisdon .	18,152	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	45	363	408	22.4
1905 .	—	61	336	397	21.3
Atherstone .	17,729	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	39	469	508	28.6
1905 .	—	65	376	441	24.8
Evesham .	17,629	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	122	400	522	29.5
1905 .	—	147	349	496	28.0
Foleshill .	17,002	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	59	308	367	21.5
1905 .	—	65	343	408	23.9
Ross .	16,117	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	104	544	648	40.2
1905 .	—	114	495	609	37.7
Uttoxeter .	15,808	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	88	304	392	24.7
1905 .	—	93	294	387	24.5

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*6. *Nineteen Unions with from 15,000 to 25,000 Population—contd.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Shipston-on-Stour .	15,053	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	120	616	736	48.8
1905 .	—	137	574	711	47.2

7. *Fifteen Unions with from 10,000 to 15,000 Population.*

Ellesmere .	14,486	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	64	137	201	13.8
1905 .	—	77	137	214	14.5
Bridgnorth .	14,485	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	108	235	343	23.6
1905 .	—	121	200	321	22.1
Drayton .	13,849	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	44	210	254	18.3
1905 .	—	48	226	274	19.8
Ledbury .	13,733	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	94	557	651	47.4
1905 .	—	108	554	662	48.2
Newport .	13,562	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	79	237	316	23.3
1905 .	—	84	203	287	21.1
Leominster .	13,341	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	59	365	424	31.7
1905 .	—	68	352	420	31.4
Pershore .	12,754	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	74	373	447	35.0
1905 .	—	85	399	484	37.1
Tewkesbury .	12,709	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	86	366	452	35.5
1905 .	—	83	321	404	31.8
Whitchurch .	12,060	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	91	171	262	21.7
1905 .	—	98	170	268	22.2
Martley .	11,980	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	95	545	640	53.4
1905 .	—	100	424	524	43.7

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*7. *Fifteen Unions with from 10,000 to 15,000 Population—contd.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Shifnal . .	11,801	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	64	204	268	22.7
1905 . .	—	79	233	312	26.4
Dursley . .	11,636	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	94	317	411	35.3
1905 . .	—	72	360	432	37.1
Meriden . .	11,346	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	55	291	346	30.5
1905 . .	—	76	251	327	28.8
Kington . .	10,522	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	78	351	429	40.8
1905 . .	—	83	297	380	36.1
Wem . .	10,415	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	59	100	159	15.2
1905 . .	—	86	148	234	22.4

8. *Fourteen Unions with Populations under 10,000.*

Bromyard . .	9,907	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	81	252	333	33.6
1905 . .	—	75	251	326	32.9
Southam . .	9,903	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	71	318	389	39.3
1905 . .	—	68	308	376	37.9
Cleobury					
Mortimer . .	8,870	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	61	55	116	13.1
1905 . .	—	49	77	126	14.1
Winchcomb . .	8,825	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	62	211	273	30.9
1905 . .	—	48	194	242	27.4
Clun . .	8,491	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	49	197	246	28.9
1905 . .	—	49	131	180	21.2
Newent . .	8,249	—	—	—	—
1900 . .	—	68	330	398	48.2
1905 . .	—	66	286	352	42.6

III. UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND DIVISION—*continued.*8. *Fourteen Unions with Populations under 10,000—continued.*

	Population (1901).	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Paupers per 1,000 of Population.
Stow-on-the-Wold .	8,151	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	55	307	362	44.4
1905 .	—	56	280	336	41.2
Northleach .	8,100	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	55	245	300	37.0
1905 .	—	66	182	248	30.6
Dore .	7,325	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	61	267	328	44.7
1905 .	—	67	319	386	52.6
Tenbury .	7,005	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	56	118	174	24.8
1905 .	—	53	88	141	20.1
Weobley .	6,951	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	36	218	254	38.0
1905 .	—	48	173	221	33.3
Tetbury .	6,145	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	39	245	284	46.2
1905 .	—	38	237	275	44.7
Wheatenhurst .	6,105	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	52	265	317	51.9
1905 .	—	54	194	248	40.6
Church Stretton	5,295	—	—	—	—
1900 .	—	46	69	115	21.7
1905 .	—	44	55	99	18.7

PAUPERS PER 1,000 OF POPULATION ON 1ST JANUARY 1905.

ORDER OF COUNTIES AND UNIONS IN WEST MIDLAND
DIVISION.(a.) *Counties—*

1. Warwick -	-	-	-	-	-	19.5
2. Salop -	-	-	-	-	-	22.0
3. Worcester	-	-	-	-	-	25.7
4. Gloucester	-	-	-	-	-	29.0
5. Stafford -	-	-	-	-	-	30.9
6. Hereford	-	-	-	-	-	35.5

(b.) *Unions with over 200,000 population—*

1. Aston (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	13.0
2. Birmingham (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	21.1
3. Bristol (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	27.9

(c.) *Unions with more than 150,000 and less than 200,000
population—*

1. King's Norton (Worcester)	-	-	-	18.4
2. West Bromwich (Stafford)	-	-	-	23.6
3. Stoke-upon-Trent (Stafford)	-	-	-	34.4
4. Dudley (Stafford)	-	-	-	34.6
5. Wolverhampton (Stafford)	-	-	-	35.3

(d.) *Unions with more than 90,000 and less than 120,000
population—*

1. Burton-upon-Trent (Stafford)	-	-	-	23.9
2. Walsall (Stafford)	-	-	-	26.9
3. Stourbridge (Worcester)	-	-	-	27.2
4. Wolstanton and Burslem (Stafford)	-	-	-	32.3

(e.) *Unions with more than 40,000 and less than 80,000 population—*

1. Atcham (Salop)	-	-	-	-	12.2
2. Solihull (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	15.3
3. Coventry (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	16.7
4. Gloucester	-	-	-	-	23.3
5. Warwick	-	-	-	-	23.4
6. Lichfield (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	24.8
7. Leek (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	24.9
8. Cannock (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	25.3
9. Cheltenham (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	26.5
10. Newcastle-under-Lyme (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	26.8
11. Worcester	-	-	-	-	28.8
12. Kidderminster (Worcester)	-	-	-	-	35.0

(f.) *Unions with more than 25,000 and less than 40,000 population—*

1. Nuneaton (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	22.6
2. Rugby (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	24.3
3. Bromsgrove (Worcester)	-	-	-	-	24.3
4. Oswestry (Salop)	-	-	-	-	24.9
5. Stroud (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	27.7
6. Wellington (Salop)	-	-	-	-	27.9
7. Hereford	-	-	-	-	28.8
8. Upton-upon-Severn (Worcester)	-	-	-	-	32.3
9. Stafford	-	-	-	-	34.7

(g.) *Unions with more than 15,000 and less than 25,000 population—*

1. Seisdon (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	21.3
2. Tamworth (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	23.5
3. Foleshill (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	23.9
4. Uttoxeter (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	24.5
5. Stone (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	24.7
6. Atherstone (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	24.8
7. Ludlow (Salop)	-	-	-	-	25.9
8. Evesham (Worcester)	-	-	-	-	28.0
9. Cheadle (Stafford)	-	-	-	-	28.6
10. Thornbury (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	32.6
11. Madeley (Salop)	-	-	-	-	32.9
12. Alcester (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	33.7
13. Droitwich (Worcester)	-	-	-	-	35.0
14. Westbury-on-Severn (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	35.5
15. Chipping Sodbury (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	35.5
16. Cirencester (Gloucester)	-	-	-	-	35.7
17. Stratford-on-Avon (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	36.2
18. Ross (Hereford)	-	-	-	-	37.7
19. Shipston-on-Stour (Warwick)	-	-	-	-	47.2

(h.) Unions with more than 10,000 and less than 15,000 population—

1. Ellesmere (Salop)	-	-	-	14.5
2. Drayton (Salop)	-	-	-	19.8
3. Newport (Salop)	-	-	-	21.1
4. Bridgnorth (Salop)	-	-	-	22.1
5. Whitchurch (Salop)	-	-	-	22.2
6. Wem (Salop)	-	-	-	22.4
7. Shifnal (Salop)	-	-	-	26.4
8. Meriden (Warwick)	-	-	-	28.8
9. Leominster (Hereford)	-	-	-	31.4
10. Tewkesbury (Gloucester)	-	-	-	31.8
11. Kington (Hereford)	-	-	-	36.1
12. Dursley (Gloucester)	-	-	-	37.1
13. Pershore (Worcester)	-	-	-	37.1
14. Martley (Worcester)	-	-	-	43.7
15. Ledbury (Hereford)	-	-	-	48.2

(i.) Unions with under 10,000 population—

1. Cleobury Mortimer (Salop)	-	-	-	14.1
2. Church Stretton (Salop)	-	-	-	18.7
3. Tenbury (Worcester)	-	-	-	20.1
4. Clun (Salop)	-	-	-	21.2
5. Winchcomb (Gloucester)	-	-	-	27.4
6. Northleach (Gloucester)	-	-	-	30.6
7. Bromyard (Hereford)	-	-	-	32.9
8. Weobley (Hereford)	-	-	-	33.3
9. Southam (Warwick)	-	-	-	37.9
10. Wheatenhurst (Gloucester)	-	-	-	40.6
11. Stow-on-the-Wold (Gloucester)	-	-	-	41.2
12. Newent (Gloucester)	-	-	-	42.6
13. Tetbury (Gloucester)	-	-	-	44.7
14. Dore (Hereford)	-	-	-	52.6

South Wales and Monmouthshire District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FIFTEENTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR THE
SOUTH WALES AND MONMOUTHSHIRE DISTRICT,
COMPRISING THE COUNTIES OF BRECKNOCKSHIRE,
CARDIGANSHIRE, CARMARTHENSHIRE, GLAMORGAN-
SHIRE, MONMOUTHSHIRE, PEMBROKESHIRE, AND
RADNORSHIRE, HELD AT THE PARISH HALL,
BRECON, ON TUESDAY AND WEDNESDAY, 19TH
AND 20TH JUNE 1906.

President.

MR HERBERT LLOYD, J.P.,
Chairman, Pontardawe Board of Guardians.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

* Representatives specially delegated by their Boards.

BRECKNOCKSHIRE.

BRECKNOCK—

*George, Anerin.
*Williams, John.
*Williams, Thomas.
*Thomas, M. F. (Clerk).
Price, Owen (Chairman).
Thomas, Morgan (Vice-Chairman).
Best, C. W.
Bevan, Rev. E. L.
Jones, John.
Jones, James.
Jones, Thomas.
Jones, John.
Jenkins, Rev. R. M.
Morgan, Tom.
Price, Thos.
Thomas, E. D.
Williams, Miss A.
Williams, Rev. G.
Williams, Lt.-Col. R. D. G.
Williams, Jenkin.
Williams, J. J.

BRECKNOCK (*continued*)—

Williams, Rev. M. P.
Williams, Thomas.

BUILT—

*Owen, Rev. D.

CRICKHOWEL—

*Morgan, R. (Chairman).
*Rosser, W.
*Williams, Rev. T. B.
*Blennerhassett, I. (Clerk).

HAY—

*Griffith, Rev. H.
*Griffiths, R. T. (Clerk).

CARMARTHENSHIRE.

LLANDILO FAWR—

*Lewis, D. W.
*Powell, L. N.
*Lewis, R. S. (Clerk).

LLANDOVERY—

- *Davies, D. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Lewis, Rees (Vice-Chairman).
- Williams, E.

GLAMORGANSHIRE.**BRIDGEND AND COWBRIDGE—**

- *Davies, Michael.
- *Hopkin, Edward.
- *Pope, James.

CARDIFF—

- *Ames, J. J.
- *Norman, Mrs.
- *Rees, Eli.
- *Harris, A. J. (Clerk).
- Sankey, Mrs.

MERTHYR TYDFIL—

- *Rogers, John.
- *Richards, Mrs M.

NEATH—

- *Jones, Hopkin (Chairman).
- *Hughes, Rev. H.
- Hopkins, E. J.

PONTARDAWE—

- *Francis, L. W.
- *Powell, Jno.
- Lloyd, H. (Chairman).

SWANSEA—

- *Johnston, J. W. (Chairman).
- *Williams, Mrs A. J.
- *Jenkins, L.L. (Clerk).
- Williams, Mrs H. D.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.**ABERGAVENNY—**

- *Young, Rev. S. R. (Vice-Chairman).

BEDWELLTY—

- *Williams, E. J. (Chairman).
- *Evans, Jno. (Vice-Chairman).
- *James, Henry.
- *Shepherd, H. J. C. (Clerk).
- Manning, Jas.

CHEPSTOW—

- *Williams, Rev. W. H.

NEWPORT—

- *Dutfield, T. (Chairman).
- *Evans, Wm.
- *Little, Mrs.
- *Thomas, I. (Clerk).

PONTYPOOL—

- *James, W. P. (Chairman).
- *Watkins, T. (Clerk).

PEMBROKESHIRE.**NARBERTH—**

- *Morgan, Jno.
- *Lewis, H. (Clerk).

VISITORS.

F. T. Bircham (Local Government Board Inspector).
Professor Millicent Mackenzie (Cardiff).

The following Unions were not represented either by Delegates or other Guardians:—

CARDIGANSHIRE.—Aberayron, Aberystwyth, Cardigan, Lampeter, Tregaron.

CARMARTHENSHIRE.—Carmarthen, Llanelly, Newcastle-in-Emlyn.

GLAMORGANSHIRE.—Gower, Pontypridd.

MONMOUTHSHIRE.—Monmouth.

PEMBROKESHIRE.—Haverfordwest, Pembroke.

RADNORSHIRE.—Knighton, Rhayader,

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
UNDERFED SCHOOL CHILDREN. By Professor MILLICENT MACKENZIE, <i>University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire</i>	78
THE UNEMPLOYED. By Mr JAMES MANNING, <i>Poor Law Guardian, Bedwellty</i>	97

The PRESIDENT at the outset apologised for the absence of Mr O. H. Jones of Cardiff, who had been announced to take the chair and who was unable to be present through having to attend a meeting of the County Licensing Committee. Mr Jones, said the Chairman, was a most able man who had had long experience of Poor Law matters, and it was unfortunate that he was not there to give them the benefit of his advice and help in the place of himself.

The Mayor of Brecon (Mr J. W. HEDGER), who was attired in his robes of office and was accompanied by the Town Clerk (Mr G. HYATT WILLIAMS), extended a cordial welcome to the delegates on behalf of the residents of the town on the occasion of the second visit of the Conference to the ancient borough. He believed the benefits accruing from such meetings were great, and he felt sure that the Guardians present would be enlightened by the interesting papers to be read on many points in Poor Law administration. The administration of the Poor Law was always a most difficult matter, and he believed the local Guardians deserved to be complimented by the public—he thought he was right in saying that they had been complimented—for their economical administration of the Poor Law in that Union which would compare favourably with others—say, for instance, that of Poplar, which at the present time was very unpopular. (Laughter.) He would not detain them further, but desired once more to offer them all a very hearty welcome to the town. (Applause.)

The PRESIDENT, in opening the proceedings, explained that it was fourteen years since the Conference was last held at Brecon. Although it had not been continuously held during that time, it had been held in most years, and he thought the success of the gatherings had been largely due to the able presidency of the Chairman of that day. In the space of fifteen years they must expect to see material changes—changes of all sorts. One sad change was that many old familiar faces that were recognised and respected fourteen years ago had disappeared from the Conference. Some had gone over to the great majority; some from advancing age and weariness had had to retire after many years of devotion to the public service. And while he mentioned that, he could not help congratulating the meeting and himself on seeing a gentleman there who presided fourteen years ago—the Reverend Prebendary Garnons Williams. Though he had retired from the chair of the Brecon Union, he was still present with them in good health, and, with the speaker, all would sincerely trust that he would be spared for many years to enjoy that peace and rest which his long service in the interest of the country had undoubtedly entitled him to. (Applause.) Proceeding, the Chairman observed that there were many matters that might be brought to their attention when they came to consider the lapse of fourteen years. There had been, for instance, a wonderful change throughout the country. One unpleasant feature had been the increase of rates, which had gone up by leaps and bounds in many districts. He did not put it down to Poor

Law administration alone, but rather it was in consequence of the rapid strides which the country had made in many respects in the past, and to habits which entailed upon Boards of Guardians the expenditure of large amounts, although the poor rate, he need hardly remind them, was a misnomer, inasmuch as all rates were virtually grouped under the heading of "poor rate." The increase in the rates was largely due to the increase in the population and to the habits and customs of the people. People required now more than they required fifteen years ago. Then, the collier was perfectly satisfied with the wash down which his wife gave him in the tub in the back kitchen, whereas he now asked for a bath and for a supply of water. (Hear, hear.) Although fifteen years ago the water supplies were adequate for the population, he was afraid, owing to the increase which had since taken place, that eventually they would have to go long distances in order to bring a wholesome supply to their people. Then, again, there were the sanitary arrangements, which had become a most expensive item—they had to supply sewage and other things; and then there came the education question. The old school boards had died a natural death. What the result of the new Education Act might be he could not venture to foresee, but he feared that would be sure to mean an additional outlay, and the rates would not be very largely relieved, if indeed they were not increased. At the same time, to any one who had taken a real interest in them, sanitary and highway matters were a source of anxiety. They had, however, to look forward in these matters—they could not stand still—to what might happen years hence. They had a duty to perform, not only to their present people—to make them as comfortable and healthy and happy as they possibly could—but they had a duty to perform also to those who came after them by ensuring that whatever they might do would be but a paving stone to what they would require, and what they would fully approve of hereafter. They were Guardians of the Poor; as such, their first duty was to see that those entrusted to their charge were properly looked after though not spoiled—that their wants should be supplied in all reason, but that due consideration and care should be exercised in investigating the cases that came before them. Their relief should not be meagre but fair and reasonable—(hear, hear)—he did not say lavish, but sufficient. But at the same time, if they were Guardians of the Poor, they were also guardians of the ratepayers' funds, and it was their bounden duty before taking any serious steps, or "going ahead," as some people would say, to weigh well what they were doing and make sure that it was for the benefit of the public and not an unnecessary or unreasonable tax upon the ratepayers' pockets. Before he closed, there was one subject to which he was bound to allude, and to this they would all agree. He had referred to the changing times and to the missing of old faces and old friends—old active Guardians, who had gone, but there was one to whom he was bound to allude who was still present with them. He was deeply

sorry that they were about to lose Mr Bircham. (Hear, hear.) To most of them Mr Bircham had been perfectly well known, but personally he had known him for over thirty years as a Poor Law Inspector, and he had no hesitation in saying that no other Inspector was likely for years to fill his place. His experience, his sound common-sense, and his impartiality had endeared him to all the Guardians who had had any experience of him at all. His services would be missed after he had gone, and no one, he knew, would miss him more than he would, for he had invariably felt that in any trouble or difficult matter they could always depend upon him to give them good sound advice, and treat them in a fair and impartial manner. In difficult matters of alterations he was always actuated solely by the desire to benefit the particular Board he was interested in for the time being and the public at large. (Cheers.) In conclusion, Mr Lloyd proposed that a very hearty vote of thanks be given by the Conference to Mr Bircham for the able, conscientious, and impartial manner in which he had performed his duties, and that they express at the same time their deep regret at the fact that he was about to leave them, and a hope that his mantle would fall upon the shoulders of one who would worthily fill his place. (Applause.)

Mr J. J. AMES (Cardiff) seconded.

Mr DUTFIELD (Newport) also expressed regret at the approaching retirement of Mr Bircham. They had had a great deal of experience of Mr Bircham at Newport, especially of late years, because they had had to reconstruct their Workhouse. That took quite six years and necessitated an expenditure of between £50,000 and £60,000. They were confronted now and again with very considerable difficulties, and the best friend they had was Mr Bircham, who gave them every help he possibly could. (Hear, hear.) As chairman of the Building Committee of that time, he was deeply grateful to him for the service he rendered. He first became a Guardian about thirty years ago. Mr Bircham was the first and only Poor Law Inspector he had ever known, and he had been a very efficient one. Personally he would like to see him going on for many years to come, but he supposed the age limit had to take effect. He thought they could, however, congratulate Mr Bircham upon being in good health, and trust that he would live long to enjoy the leisure he had so thoroughly earned.

Mr JAMES MANNING acknowledged the service which Mr Bircham had rendered to the Bedwellty Guardians in the carrying out of several expensive matters, and associated himself cordially on behalf of that Board with the kindly sentiments to which expression had been given.

Mr J. W. JOHNSTON remarked that the Swansea Board had carried out a lot of work, and that they had found Mr Bircham's sound practical knowledge of building matters exceedingly useful. They had also spent a considerable amount of money in sanitation and

other things. They thoroughly appreciated the very excellent services which the retiring Inspector had rendered, and in common with other Guardians they were sincerely sorry they were about to be deprived of them.

Rev. H. HUGHES said the Neath Guardians had at all times found Mr Bircham impartial and courteous. He regretted very much that he was leaving them, and he might say that, personally, he would be quite prepared to ask that his time should be extended. (Cheers.)

Mr W. P. JAMES (Pontypool) having spoken of the immense improvement which had taken place in the care of the poor during the last quarter of a century,

Mrs NORMAN referred to the great assistance which Mr Bircham had rendered to the Cardiff Guardians in the carrying out of their Cottage Homes scheme. He had given them valuable help and advice, and the ladies especially felt that they were losing a friend in losing him. She was pleased to observe that in his case the usual order of things was being reversed. At sixty or sixty-five years of age men were usually going into the Workhouses, whereas Mr Bircham was bidding them farewell. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr A. J. HARRIS (Hon. Sec. to the Conference) expressed his thorough agreement with everything that had been said. They felt the deepest regret, indeed, when they learned of Mr Bircham's impending retirement. He had been a great friend to the officials. He had always been thoroughly agreeable, and whenever any difficulties had arisen he was ever ready to give the most patient hearing possible to questions submitted to him, and to consider them with the utmost impartiality. Guardians had benefited at all times by his advice, while at Cardiff they would never have achieved the success they had, so far as the things they had carried out were concerned, unless Mr Bircham had been at their side. He was sure it would be a very long time indeed before any Inspector was able to fill his place in South Wales. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. DAVID OWEN (Builth) was also pleased to acknowledge the good work done by Mr Bircham during his tenure of the important office which he had filled for so long a period, and added that he had never heard a single word said against him by any Guardian. When a resolution of appreciation in reference to the retirement of Mr Bircham was submitted to the Board with which he was connected he (the speaker) had sat down, and he did not think he could pay him a higher compliment than by following a similar course on that occasion. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr MICHAEL DAVIES (Bridgend) declared that Mr Bircham had been a very excellent officer. He thought the Bridgend Board were deserving of great sympathy, inasmuch as they had lost their Chairman, Archdeacon Edmonds, who had retired from the position which he had filled for twenty-five years, and now they were losing Mr Bircham who had rendered them great help in the past. The

latter, fortunately or unfortunately, had not allowed them to have all their own way, but he had made them build Cottage Homes—he thought the first in South Wales—and they were very proud of them, inasmuch as they had reared up good boys and girls who were now scattered all over the world. (Applause.) He desired to avail himself of that opportunity also to thank him for advising them in regard to their new hospital, and trusted that he would visit them and see it before he resigned.

Mr OWEN PRICE (Chairman of the Brecon Board) cordially endorsed all that had been said by the previous speakers, and expressed the pleasure it afforded him to support the resolution submitted by the Chairman.

Rev. T. B. WILLIAMS (Crickhowel) said that according to an eminent surgeon a man was no good after forty years of age. Mr Bircham, however, was as active as ever, and he hoped that he would live long to enjoy his well-earned retirement. (Cheers.)

Mrs D. M. RICHARDS (Merthyr), who followed, expressed the sorrow with which Mr Bircham's approaching retirement was viewed by the women Guardians of her Union.

Rev. S. R. YOUNG (Abergavenny) said that some of the gentlemen who had spoken had explained that they had had Mr Bircham's valuable help in building new Workhouses. In Abergavenny they had not. They were very likely to have it, but it did not come off. Others again had had the benefit of the retiring Inspector's assistance in regard to repairs to existing houses, but again they at Abergavenny had not. They would have some one in Mr Bircham's place, and he could only hope that his successor, whoever he might be—though possibly he might not have the same experience—would be able to bring to bear in the performance of the duties devolving upon him the same excellent abilities and those qualities of courtesy and impartiality which had been so manifest in Mr Bircham in all he had had to do with them. (Applause.) Some one had said that Mr Bircham had not always allowed them to have things all their own way. Well, he did not know that a greater proof could be afforded of the soundness of his common-sense and of the consideration to which his experience entitled him. (Hear, hear.) As far as he knew, Mr Bircham would carry with him into his retirement the good wishes of the whole of the Guardians and their deep and sincere appreciation of the services which he had rendered. He had looked to the interests of the ratepayers, and also to those of the poor. Especially did he (the speaker) remember that in their Union they had passed through times of very great difficulty, and he was pleased to be able to say that Mr Bircham was always ready to give such advice as they felt it was right and reasonable to act upon. In Abergavenny they shared the general regret which his impending departure had occasioned, although it was one of the inevitable things to which they had to submit.

The resolution was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously and with acclamation.

On rising to reply, Mr Bircham was received with great enthusiasm—"Behold," he said, "how great a fire a little matter kindleth." He had no idea that the few remarks of his old friend Mr Herbert Lloyd would have brought forth such a chorus of undeserved praise—(no, no)—as they had heard for the last quarter of an hour. He had not been able during the last three or four weeks to visit the whole of the Boards or to accomplish all that he would like to. He had, at the various Boards of Guardians he had attended, heard nothing but kind and almost affectionate words expressed to him by all. He only wished it were in his power to go right round personally and say "good-bye." He had done so in a few cases, and those whom he was unable to visit would, he hoped, forgive his non-attendance, though he would do so as far as he could. He thanked those present from the bottom of his heart for their kindness and for the observations which had been made. Despite these, however, he was greatly aware of many shortcomings. He could only say that the courtesy, consideration, and forbearance which he had met with at the hands of the Boards of Guardians in South Wales and Monmouthshire during the thirty-four and a half years he had been officially connected with them had been the means of enabling him to accomplish any little good he had been able to do, if such had been the case. He again desired to thank the Conference most heartily for the kind words he had heard that day, and wished from his heart that they were really deserved. (Loud applause.)

Professor MILLICENT MACKENZIE then read the following paper:—

UNDERFED SCHOOL CHILDREN.

BY PROFESSOR MILLICENT MACKENZIE,

University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire.

THE consideration of the problem of how to deal with underfed school children has been forced upon the attention of Poor Law Guardians by the Circular-Letter issued by the Local Government Board and the Relief (School Children) Order of April 1905.

The problem itself is not new, but is one that has attracted public attention for years past, and many efforts have been made to solve it. The new element introduced by the Letter and Order is the relation of Boards of Guardians to the problem. Is it to them

that the country must look for the solution of the difficulty? If so, much larger powers must be obtained than those indicated in the Order. It may be found, however, that there are other ways in which the need may be met without imposing a new burden on the Guardians. Let us then proceed to consider the precise nature and scope of the problem and the various possibilities of dealing with it.

Had education not been made compulsory, it is possible that this problem would not have assumed its present importance. The fact of the underfeeding of children has been chiefly brought home to us by the manifest unfitness of a percentage of children to profit by the instruction given to them in school. All work implies waste, and if children are forced to work their brains and muscles at lessons, drill, &c., for five or six hours a day, it is clear that the consequent waste of brain and muscle must be repaired. For this, good food is obviously necessary, and as it is almost certain that school work involves greater wear and tear of nervous tissue than ordinary home or street life, it would follow that compulsory school attendance really implies the necessity of raising the standard of living in order to meet the extra strain which the children have to bear in those years when the demands of bodily growth have also to be met.

Through poverty, ignorance, or neglect many parents fail to supply their children with a sufficiency of food to meet these demands, and as a result the children become stunted, weakly, and anæmic, they fail to profit by the instruction given, and even where they manage to do satisfactory brain work, it is at the expense of their health. It is a serious matter for Guardians to consider whether the alarming increase in insanity among the working classes of late years may not be largely attributed to the weakening of the brain tissue in childhood, which must result if children are forced to use their brains without an adequate

supply of nourishment to repair the daily waste. This result might not be at once fully apparent. The brain may be left just strong enough to meet the ordinary demands of daily life, but there is no reserve strength to stand the strain of misfortune and distress. At the first time of stress and trouble the brain gives way, and one more inmate of a lunatic asylum is provided.

Few will deny that we have here to deal with a serious national problem. The children *must* be fed. Upon this point most people are agreed. Who is to feed them? is the question round which controversy rages.

Let us now consider the various agencies to which recourse may be had in the matter, and try to estimate the results in each case of using them to secure the desired end. These agencies may be conveniently grouped under three heads:—I. The Home, with parents or others legally responsible for the child; II. Voluntary charitable organisations; III. The State or community acting through the County Councils, Education Authorities, or Poor Law Guardians.

I. *The Home*.—Of all these agencies the first is clearly the most desirable. The home is such an important factor in education that everything should be done to strengthen its influence. The meal shared at home by parents and children affords a rallying-point for home life and is of moral as well as of physical significance. Unfortunately the causes of the underfeeding of children alluded to above, viz., poverty, ignorance, and neglect on the part of the parents, are precisely those which cannot be quickly removed. Extreme poverty, whether caused by lack of employment, illness, or any other cause, implies certain defects in our social organisation, which may in time be rectified, but meanwhile the children must starve if no money is forthcoming for the purchase of food. No amount of external pressure can force the parent to provide food if he has nothing wherewith to buy it.

At first sight it would appear comparatively easy to deal with those parents who could provide proper food if they were not too ignorant or too neglectful to do so, but those who have much to do with people of that type learn by sad experience how difficult and well-nigh impossible it is to combat effectively that adult ignorance, selfishness, or lack of sympathy which result in parental neglect. Our hope for the future lies in the proper education of those who will be the mothers and fathers in years to come rather than in any attempt to teach the parents of to-day. Too often the latter have lost all power of taking in new ideas, and it is but waste of time to try and make them understand their duties.

While attempting to grapple with the present problem it is, however, of extreme importance not to lose sight of the future. Girls must be trained to undertake the duties of the home, and those girls who are under the care of Boards of Guardians are obviously in special need of such training. Wherever Poor Law schools are still maintained, or the children live in the Workhouse, it ought not to be a difficult matter to provide practical instruction in housewifery, including simple cookery of a practical everyday kind. Where children are boarded out it may be more difficult to secure systematic instruction, unless the schools which they attend include such teaching in the curriculum. On the other hand, if the homes have been carefully chosen, the girls would be able to learn a great deal out of school hours, and this might be made a point of when making the boarding-out arrangements. In places where the Guardians actually provide the homes by grouping a certain number of children in a cottage under the care of a competent woman, it would of course be easy to arrange that she should be responsible for domestic training. The effect of this training will, however, only tell in the future. For the present solution of the problem of

underfed children we must look to voluntary effort or to the State.

II. *Voluntary Organisations.*—In London and many of the large towns of Great Britain attempts have been made to meet the most pressing need by voluntary effort. In many cases school teachers, unwilling to bear the responsibility of teaching hungry children, have provided meals for them, raising money for the purpose by private collections, concerts, &c. In times of great distress they have even undertaken to cook meals in the schools, sacrificing their own time for rest and food in order to help the children. Local committees have been formed in many places in order that the need may be met on a larger scale without unduly taxing the teachers. Some of these have been at work for the last twenty years and have accomplished much. In most cases an attempt has been made to provide cheap rather than free meals, in order to avoid as far as possible the danger of pauperisation. If the parents can be got to pay something, however small, towards the cost, it is clearly good for them to do so. The attempt to secure a small payment has met with very varying results. In Leeds $\frac{1}{2}$ d. meals have proved a success, in some parts of London 1d. and 2d. per meal can be obtained, but in Manchester and several other places extreme difficulty has been experienced in getting any payment at all.

The constitution of the committees and the ways in which they work differ in each place, but there is perhaps sufficient family likeness between them to make it possible to choose one for closer consideration and to regard it as fairly typical of others. For this purpose we may turn to the experiment which has just been made in Cardiff.

After a meeting held last year in the Cardiff Town Hall, at which Sir John Gorst was chief speaker, it was decided to form a committee representative of the various public bodies in the city to inquire into the

need and take necessary action in respect of underfed school children. The Town Council, Education Authority, Trades Council, Charity Organisation, and many other societies elected representatives, and other members were co-opted. The Board of Guardians, while expressing sympathy with the movement, thought it wiser at the moment to refrain from identifying itself with it. The local branch of the N.U.T. kindly undertook to help in finding out the extent of the need in Cardiff. It issued circulars to all the schools and by this means ascertained that over 1000 children might be regarded as underfed, especially during the winter months. It was also found that the need for dinner was more pressing than for breakfast. It was decided to try and meet at least part of this need. The Lord Mayor opened a fund, and about £100 was raised by public subscription. Three centres at which dinners could be provided were opened in the most needy parts of the city. The loan of a convenient hall was obtained in each district, and a local committee of voluntary helpers undertook the work at each centre. The expenses were thus reduced to a minimum and included only food, firing, cleaning, the purchase of crockery, spoons, and forks, and in one district the erection of a small boiler.

Arrangements were made with the head teachers of needy schools to issue a certain number of tickets daily to children who were known to be either temporarily or permanently underfed. These tickets were to cost 1d., and the teachers undertook to receive the money where obtainable, or to give the tickets free where necessary. In practice most of the tickets were free; this was, however, in large measure due to the exceptional distress in Cardiff during the winter.

From 350 to 400 children had dinner each day at an estimated cost of 1d. to 1½d. per head. Meat and vegetable stews were provided on three days in the

week, and suet and other puddings on the two remaining school days.

On the whole the experiment may be regarded as successful, but there are some obvious drawbacks to any wide application of this method of dealing with the problem. In the first place there is the money difficulty. If payment is insisted upon many of those most in need must go without the meal, and yet if any meals are provided without charge it is very difficult to know where to draw the line. Again free meals must be paid for by some one, and there are many difficulties in the way of securing a permanent subscription list.

Perhaps the most serious difficulty would be experienced in keeping up a constant supply of voluntary helpers. The work of preparing the meals is heavy, and even if each worker only takes one day a week or fortnight it is a considerable tax on time and strength.

In spite of all these difficulties, however, Bristol has succeeded in dealing with the problem on these lines for the last twenty years.

III. *The State or Community.*—It is urged by many that children belong not only to the family but also to the community, and that this is recognised by the fact of compulsory education.

The community could undertake the responsibility in several ways, of which the following are the chief:—

1. The nation might act as a whole, and Government grants be made sufficient to supply, at least, free dinners in every free school. Although many believe this to be the best possible solution, yet the enormous cost of carrying out any such plan must make even the most sanguine person pause. Moreover there are many schools where any such provision is absolutely unnecessary and would not even be welcomed.

2. The County or Town Council might act either directly or through its Education Authority. Such action might take one of the three forms:—

(a.) By opening local centres for cooking and distributing daily meals either cheap or free. (This is the plan which works so successfully in Paris.)

(b.) By utilising the cookery centres at which the girls now receive instruction. This would seem to be a good plan, as the food which they learn to cook must in any case be provided, and there is often much difficulty found in selling it afterwards. On the other hand it might not be easy to convey the cooked food to the schools or dining centres, and it is often urged that the quantities are too small to be of much use, and that the dishes prepared are not always suitable. It is clear, however that most of these difficulties could be got over if it seemed really desirable that this method should be adopted.

(c.) By reorganising some of the schools in the poorer districts on the lines of the day industrial schools, which have proved so successful in many places. Of course there would still be essential differences between them, but they would be alike in this important feature, that home as well as school education would be combined. In theory the home and the school should supplement each other—in practice they do not always do so. It is tacitly assumed that the home will at least provide food, clothing, and training in right habits of cleanliness, &c. If these are not provided, school instruction fails to produce its effect. Would it not, therefore, be better to collect together in certain schools those who are thus habitually neglected at home, and arrange for these schools a course of instruction that should combine home and school training? To mention only that which bears upon our present problem, the children would be taught to prepare, cook, and eat simple, wholesome foods as part of school work, and would thus not only be made fit to profit by the rest of the curriculum, but they would gradually form a different ideal of home life, and gain practical knowledge of how to secure it, which might

largely solve the problem of underfed children in the next generation.

3. The Poor Law Guardians have now, by virtue of the Local Government Board "Relief (School Children) Order," 1905, considerable powers for dealing with underfed children, but it may be doubted whether the powers given are precisely what are needed. As it now stands, the Order allows the Guardians to grant relief to underfed children on the application of Managers of Public Elementary Schools, or their duly empowered representatives. The fact that this relief will usually be made as a loan, which can be recovered from the father in the County Court, while, no doubt, constituting an effective obstacle to abuse, yet limits the value of the relief except in cases of wilful neglect. Few would care to apply for relief for the child in this way, unless it were quite certain that the father was really able to provide proper food and failed to do so. It would almost seem, however, from the wording of the Order, as if children living with mothers or grandparents might be relieved without any such penalty being enforced.

It is, perhaps, very doubtful whether it is really desirable at present that Poor Law Guardians should have the responsibility of dealing with underfed children thrust upon them. They have no effective organisation for the provision of meals, and it is not easy to see how they can co-operate with any charitable organisation, as suggested in the Circular-Letter, seeing that apparently they have no power to make an annual subscription to any such, and other ways of payment would appear to be unsatisfactory.

The chief value of the Order as it stands is as an effective defensive weapon in case of abuse of charitable provision of meals. Where it is known that the father could provide sufficient food, if he did not spend money in drink, for instance, and yet he allows his children to profit by free meals, the attention of the Guardians

might be drawn to the case, and the provisions of the Order put into force.

Another drawback to throwing the work upon the Guardians is, that rightly or wrongly, the poor value the franchise (which a man would lose if in receipt of this relief), and have an almost unreasoning horror of the stigma of pauperism. The children, therefore, would often be allowed to suffer rather than the true state of affairs should be known, and the father might bitterly resent a teacher reporting his child as underfed to the Guardians, if it was his misfortune rather than his fault, that this was the case.

On the whole, therefore, there is much to be said for the view that it is undesirable for Boards of Guardians to apply for further powers so as to deal with the whole problem of underfed children. It is, however, very important that they should (1) co-operate with Education Authorities and other organisations by using the powers conferred by the Order when needed, and (2) see to it that the children brought up under their supervision are so trained that the possibility of underfeeding through ignorance and neglect will be reduced to a minimum in the future.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. T. B. WILLIAMS (Crickhowel), in opening the discussion, observed that the question was very difficult of solution, and was especially pressing in the large populous centres. It was not a pleasant feeling to think that there were thousands of children who had to go to school without breakfast or perhaps a meal at all. The question was—Did the State exist for the individual or the individual for the State? And the solution of the problem would depend upon the answer which they gave to this interrogation. Whether they said the State existed for the individual or the individual for the State, there was no getting away from the fact that it was the duty of the community to feed the underfed children. What was the use of children going to school in this state, or of their trying to impart to them instruction in the rules of reading, writing, and arithmetic, when they had perhaps nothing in their stomachs? It stood to reason that it was quite absurd. In this

matter he was driven to a state of reasoning which he did not like at all. Yet he did not see how they could possibly avoid it. The more he thought of it the more he found himself becoming a Christian Socialist, which every clergyman ought to be. The three things of which they heard most at the present time were the decrease in the population, physical degeneration, and infant mortality. If the State granted the principle of free education, the State must step in also and see that no single child was allowed to go to an elementary school without being properly fed. (Hear, hear.) Free food must follow free education. The lady who had read the paper had mentioned the means by which she thought they could grapple with this question, but in his opinion the only possible way of dealing effectively and satisfactorily with it was through the State. Charity was spasmodic. He said deliberately again that the State must grapple with this question, and that it must insist upon children being properly fed when it insisted upon their being properly educated. There was an old Latin poet called Juvenal who said, *Mens sana in corpore sano*, or in other words, that they could not have a sound mind without a sound body. Take children with emaciated bodies; they were almost paralysed. There was a close union between the mind and the body, and those who prayed that these children would grow up in the way they should go, should remember that they were incapable of dealing with the problems of life because they had not been properly fed. There were two things which would be destroyed very largely if they granted the principle of free food. In the first place, it would do away with parental responsibility to a great extent—and he was very sorry for it—and also those old ideas they had had about the home. He could not, however, see how they were going to escape from it. Then there was another thing. The burdens of the ratepayer were almost intolerable now, and there was no doubt that if this question was to be grappled with, these burdens would be very considerably increased. Such was the sort of socialism to which they were being driven. By socialism he did not mean taking away some one else's property, but public co-operation for the public good. It was very sad that parents, through drunkenness, gross neglect, and vice of different kinds, should thrust upon the community at large a problem like this. It was a pity that the clergy and ministers of religion were not able to purify those homes better than they did; it was a pity they were not more successful in elevating the homes of the parents with whose children they had to deal. If they were successful in elevating the home this problem of underfed children would never come before them. (Applause.)

Rev. DAVID OWEN (Builth), in a characteristic speech, remarked that there were some parents who had not got the means to buy food, with the result that they were only half-fed themselves. There were also parents earning regular wages, but who did not know how to feed their children or what kind of food to give them. The

fact was, a large number of people gave food to their children which had been cooked in Chicago. (Laughter.) The Americans were very clever people—they fed their children with the best of everything, and sent the refuse to this country. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The speaker condemned the consumption of margarine, and argued that if children were fed more upon oatmeal than upon white bread they would be far stronger and healthier and happier. It was said sometimes that parsons should practise what they preached. Well, he might say that he had been preaching to them about oats, and what he preached about he practised when at home by taking what was known as “hwee” in Cardiganshire—some called it flummery—and “oatmeal” in other districts.

Mrs H. D. WILLIAMS (Swansea) said Professor Mackenzie’s paper reminded her, if she might say so without the slightest intention of offence, of an Oxford professor of whom a ministerial friend of hers once spoke. He was a cynic, and the advice he gave to his students was, “Whenever you see a difficulty march straight up to it, look it in the face—and then pass it by.” Mrs Mackenzie recognised the great and pressing need that existed for dealing with the underfed children of the nation, but her timidity about pauperisation made her hesitate before applying the remedy which she was sufficiently far-sighted to see. For herself, she believed in whole-hearted measures. (Applause.) When a nettle had to be grasped, it was well to grasp it boldly, and when a problem of such seriousness as the one under consideration had to be dealt with it was wise to sweep away the trivial matters on the fringe and to search for the heart of the subject. (Cheers.) And what here was the heart, that a great proportion of the children of this country were every day subject to the cruelty of being kept in school whilst they were in a state of semi-starvation. That was the dominating sinister fact. In comparison with it questions of franchise were of no importance, and the pleas about interference with parental control were of little weight. She did not desire any more than Mrs Mackenzie that men should be disfranchised or that idle women should be relieved of their obligations to their families. But she did earnestly wish to be able to feel that in a Christian country they should not have the children of the nation constantly suffering from hunger. (Loud applause.) Much had been said of voluntary effort. In Swansea they were thankful for the sustained efforts of a good band of men and women who throughout the winter months provided a series of breakfasts. What they did, however, only proved that voluntary effort was inadequate in face of the extent of the evil. Let them therefore accept the logic of the situation and send to Mr Burns a message that would encourage him to mitigate those juvenile misfortunes which Mrs Mackenzie had emphasised. Let them as Guardians of the Poor keep in mind the sufferings of the children, and they might with confidence leave it to the magistrates to deal with dissolute mothers and with drunken fathers. (Applause.)

A DELEGATE feared that undue stress might be laid on voluntary work. She agreed with the last speaker that something must be done, but she hoped the State would work through the education authorities rather than through the Boards of Guardians.

Mrs NORMAN (Cardiff) thought it was perfectly inhuman to allow little children to come to school and work who were underfed, but there was one grave danger, and it was this—that if they took upon themselves a system of feeding indiscriminately these underfed children, would they not be helping the children of the improvident? She had in her mind a parallel case where two men living side by side earned 24s. and each had a wife and eight children. The one man was industrious and sober; the other was improvident and worthless. Was it fair, she asked, that the children of the drunken, dissolute man should be assisted to the same extent as those of the temperate man?

Mrs SANKEY (Cardiff) observed that it seemed rather hard that the State should have to provide for all children inasmuch as it meant that respectable industrious working men would have to contribute towards the cost of food of the lazy, bad man's children. The question as to whether the children were fed or underfed rested very often with the mother, and it was a very important question, because they had the training of many hundreds, if not thousands, of girls, and they knew that there were many women who went out and bought things for which they paid threepence and fourpence, whereas for a little more they could make a far more nourishing and better dinner. The thing was as to how they should train their girls. In the past they had laid out money wholesale in the old barrack system, where it was quite impossible for girls to get any idea how to buy and cook an economical dinner. Now they had their children in Cottage Homes in most towns, and it was of the utmost importance that their girls should be taught to make the utmost of their opportunities. If they could only train a couple of thousand girls, she thought it would go a long way towards settling this problem. They would then have happier and better homes, and there would not be so many drunkards in the world. (Applause.) She felt it rested a great deal with them as Guardians, and she would strongly urge those present who had not got Cottage Homes to set about getting them quickly. She sincerely thanked Mrs Mackenzie for her paper, and desired to add that it was very good of Guardians to come there and give them such useful advice.

Rev. H. HUGHES (Neath) considered the paper which had been read a most excellent one. He quite agreed that they must elevate the homes, and that they ought to use the Cottage Homes to bring up good mothers. If they would only do that the future would be right. He doubted, however, the advisability of increasing the burden of rates, though he did not see how they could do without it. It was very sad to see children going to school half-fed, but it was very hard that those who had worked hard for years

should have to contribute towards the maintenance of the children of another who had had the same opportunities and who had earned the same money. He knew, for instance, of two men at Britonferry: they were both engaged at the same work and both earned a similar amount, but one had two or three houses while the other was a drunkard, and his children were paupers. Personally he would like for them as Guardians to go home from that Conference and try to produce better mothers by properly training the girls who were in their Cottage Homes. He would like to see the homes of the country placed on a higher plane, but if they wanted to see this done they must all put their shoulders to the wheel and do their very best.

Colonel GARNONS WILLIAMS (Brecon) expressed the pleasure it afforded him to see Mr Herbert Lloyd in the chair. With regard to this discussion he thought there were one or two points germane to the subject which had not been touched upon. For instance, it was very difficult for teachers in populous districts to say whether certain children were underfed or not. There were many children attending school who appeared to be underfed. They might be anæmic and emaciated, and be put down as underfed; but in a great number of cases it was not a question of underfeeding at all. Their condition probably was due to living in overcrowded dwellings, with bad ventilation and no fresh air. Food was also given to the children which was not nourishing and proper for children of that age, or there might be others again who were getting no sleep at all. Indeed, there was no doubt that a great deal of the suffering of the children in the schools, and their indifference to the carrying out of the work put before them, was on account of want of sleep; the children of the poor in large towns did not in his opinion get anything like the amount of sleep that was necessary for them. He thought that if they were to deal with underfeeding they should deal with other causes as well. To deal with underfeeding alone without proper inquiry at the home as to the state of the children was only to deal with a tithe of the problem, whereas they wanted to get at the bottom of the whole thing. (Applause.) If, after proper inquiry at the home, a child was found to be underfed it was the duty of somebody to feed it; there was no doubt about that. It seemed to him that the really destitute parents should be dealt with by the Guardians; those who could feed their children, but who did not do so through neglect, vice, or other such causes, he could not help feeling ought to be dealt with by the magistrates, and stringent measures taken; while as regarded the third class—those who through temporary adversity were unable to provide for their children, such as parents out of work—he thought the number would be found manageable, and that they ought to be dealt with by charitable effort. It seemed to him it would be a thousand pities to interfere with parental responsibility. At any rate he was quite convinced that the way to deal with the matter was through the family; and there might

be other causes which they might find out by inquiry. This would be much more effective than giving food to the children.

Mr DUMARESQ THOMAS (Brecon) called attention to a point which he observed no one had referred to, and that was that they must not shut their eyes to the fact that if they commenced to feed the children they would soon have to go one step further and also clothe them. In his experience in a country parish like his what came most under his notice was not so much the want of food as the want of proper clothing in wet weather. The poor little mites had to come long distances, and often got wet through, both coming to and returning from school, and he feared that very often many of them had no dry change to put on when they reached their homes.

Mr W. E. EVANS (Newport) said he felt greatly obliged to Professor Mackenzie for her paper, for he had taken a great interest in the question for a very long time. His object in attending the Conference was to be able to arrive at some solution of the problem of underfed children. In spite of the most interesting debate to which he had listened, he felt the question was too big to answer all at once, and that it was not an easy matter to form any satisfactory opinion. However, he had felt greatly helped by listening to the experiences of those who already knew something of the feeding of the children, and who had also taken an active part in the work during the past winter, not to mention the experience he had gained by participating in it himself. He would there say that on the whole the plan adopted was a successful one, though he felt some doubt as to the future on two accounts: (1) that the response would not be so great owing to the novelty having gone somewhat; (2) that those who could give would not, thinking that they would be unwisely relieving the parents of their legal responsibility. Thus it seemed that the scheme could not be a successful one if it was entirely an organisation of the education committee. Therefore he thought that the Boards of Guardians should certainly take a large part in dealing with the question, especially as it was obvious that the relieving officer would make a good inquiry officer also. He thought the State should take up the problem of feeding underfed children, and should make a grant according to the needs of the district, and that the administration should be in the hands of the education committee working jointly with the Board of Guardians, and also carrying on simultaneously with the same funds a scheme for providing boots for necessitous children. Birmingham, he believed, had a good scheme for dealing with the latter matter. He was not acquainted with the details, but he believed that boots were given away to children at the People's Hall—he thought in Hurst Street. In Newport they had a scheme by which the Board of Guardians were empowered to give boots to the extent of 800 or 900 pairs per annum to those in receipt of relief, thus showing that something should be done for the other poor children. They had also made an effort at Newport to solve the problem by forming a committee

consisting (1) of the members of the education committee; (2) members of the Board of Guardians; (3) ministers and clergymen; (4) head masters and head mistresses in schools; and (5) cooking instructresses. This committee obtained the consent of the education committee to use their four cooking centres for the preparation of the meals. The speaker bore testimony to the readiness with which the local teachers assisted in the work, and to the response which had been made by those who were appealed to in connection with the fund, and added, that although his experience in the matter was not so great as his interest in the welfare of the children, he sincerely hoped some satisfactory solution of the great problem with which they were confronted would shortly be found. (Applause.)

Mr JAMES MANNING (Bedwelty) referred at the outset to the suggestion of some of the previous speakers to the effect that there should be discrimination, and with regard to the cases which had been mentioned, expressed the opinion that the remedy lay in their own hands. He would like to remind them, however, that the children of the two homes—the thrifty and thriftless parents—each had an equal claim upon them, not only to be fed, but to be provided with fair conditions for a start in life. At the same time, he knew that they would not be able to solve this problem unless the whole of the facts were thoroughly thrashed out. And that, he took it, was why they were there; because if a true solution were to be found at all, it could only be found by careful consideration of the whole of the arguments to be adduced on both sides. (Hear, hear.) The children must be cared for without discrimination as to the character of the parents. This must be the chief aim of the constitution. They must be provided for by the country. He knew that there was a great deal of kindness and generosity about, but there was also a great deal of penuriousness. At the same time, he admitted that there was nothing which was abused more than charity. He had had a great deal to do with strikes, and he knew that there was a great deal of poverty; he knew also that there was a great deal of corruption. They were dealing too much with sentiment, which he wanted to see removed out of the area of this question altogether. The child must be dealt with by a national system of equality; he did not think they could deal with it so well from a Guardian's point of view. It would rather have to be dealt with by the education authorities. In the 1898 strike in the coalfield, they fed the children through the education authorities. They got the teachers to organise a system that dealt with the children in the schools, giving them two meals a day, and they found that they improved wonderfully during that period; while the children of others who were not under their care were weak and puny. That proved to him that these children might be saved if dealt with in a systematic way as suggested through the education authorities. Mr Manning also emphasised the great importance of dealing with the children of those parents who were the parasites of society, and declared that

unless this were done, they would be breeding that kind of men and women all through the country. We had bred a nation of drunkards, and we must deal with the matter at its source. (Hear, hear.)

Professor MACKENZIE, in replying to the discussion, remarked that despite the different views to which expression had been given, her first conviction remained unaltered, and she was more than ever convinced that the educational solution was the real one and that the children must be taught what to eat as well as how to eat it, and how to prepare it. Several instances of the necessity of this had come under her notice and showed the tremendous responsibility which rested upon them in educating the women of the future. She did not think they were due to the fact that women were careless. She believed, on the contrary, that they wanted to do the very best they could for their children, but they did not know how to do it. She urged that it was very necessary that in the Cottage Homes and schools managed by the educational authorities they should give more definite training as to what home life was and what it really meant. She felt very strongly that their curriculum for elementary schools needed a thorough overhauling in this particular direction, for, after all, this problem was one which largely concerned the women. Wherever she went she found the same reason given—the children were underfed because the mothers were either ignorant or careless. Meanwhile, they must educate the children they had got. They must do something, and that something, she thought, they could do through charity organisation. They must remember that the children could not really be pauperised. They must be supplied with food—whether it came through the parents or teachers really did not matter much. She believed in the principle of socialism—that the State should see to the training of children, and that they should have a chance in life. But it seemed to her that it was not by doing away with the home, but by strengthening the home, that they would best achieve the object they had in view. (Applause.)

OTHER BUSINESS.

The CHAIRMAN moved the re-election of the three retiring representatives on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences—namely, Mr F. J. Beavan (Cardiff), Mr S. H. Cowper-Coles, and Dr Gomer Lewis. The names were, on the suggestion of one of the delegates, submitted separately, with the result that the first two gentlemen were appointed with Mr J. W. Johnston (Chairman of the Swansea Board), the latter being elected in the place of Dr Gomer Lewis.

On the motion of Mr OWEN PRICE, seconded by Mr HOPKIN JONES, Mr Herbert Lloyd, J.P., was unanimously re-elected Chairman of the Executive Committee, to whom the selection of the locale of next year's meeting was referred.

Mr ARTHUR J. HARRIS was unanimously re-appointed Honorary Secretary, and in thanking those present for their renewed confidence, assured them that he was extremely pleased to undertake the work, especially when it led to such a Conference as that. The subject under consideration had been discussed from a variety of aspects which must lead to good results in future. (Applause.)

The SECRETARY then read a letter which had been received from the Merthyr Board directing attention to the advisability of joint action by the Boards of Guardians of South Wales and Monmouthshire respecting the treatment of consumptive patients.

Mr IRVINE BLENNERHASSET moved that the matter be referred to the Executive Committee.

Mrs D. M. RICHARDS (Aberdare), in seconding, explained that the Board had no intention of forcing a resolution in any form, but hoped the Conference would ventilate the matter with a view to ascertaining how it affected other Unions. It was indeed a pressing question with them—perhaps more so in the coalfields owing to the confined nature of the employment. The Merthyr Board maintained seven or eight patients at Sandgate, in Kent, at considerable expense, whereas if all Unions, or even those in Glamorgan, would only combine, consumptive patients could be dealt with much more cheaply and with greater satisfaction to all concerned. She had great pleasure in seconding the resolution.

In the course of a short discussion which ensued the CHAIRMAN explained, in reply to Mr Ames, that the delegates present were not empowered to commit their Boards to any definite line of action, and that perhaps the best way of dealing with the subject would be for the Merthyr Board to address their communication to the different Boards of Guardians in the county. In this way they would be able to ascertain the opinion of the Boards, and the matter might then come up for discussion next year, if desired, when the delegates could express the views of the bodies with which they were connected.

Mr J. J. AMES said the reason he had raised the question was because he understood that the duty of Poor Law Guardians was to relieve destitution, and that the health committee of a council or corporation was the proper authority which should deal with cases of infectious disease.

The CHAIRMAN said he did not know that they could go further at present. After the matter had been discussed by the different Boards of Guardians, the question might come before the Executive Committee, and they might be able to get a paper read on it at next year's Conference.

The matter then dropped, and the proceedings were then adjourned until Wednesday morning.

WEDNESDAY, 20th JUNE 1906.

The business of the Conference was resumed at 10.30 on Wednesday morning, Mr Owen Price, Chairman of the Brecon Board, presiding.

In opening the proceedings, the CHAIRMAN said they had heard a very interesting paper the previous day upon a very intricate question, and they had a full discussion upon it afterwards. Of course there were different opinions expressed ; some of the speakers went in one direction and others in a different direction. After all, he thought they should consider this matter in an impartial manner, and not entirely ignore the responsibility of parents. (Hear, hear.) It was their duty if possible to improve the homes of the people. They should endeavour to get better dwellings and sanitary arrangements. He believed a great deal could be done in this way, and that the social life of the country could be very much improved if the dwellings of the labouring classes were improved and looked after in a better way. Another very important question would be submitted for discussion that morning—in fact he believed it was the most difficult question in connection with the administration of the Poor Law. It had been a question which had puzzled Boards of Guardians and even the higher authorities for a great number of years, and it was very difficult to say in which way the problem could be solved. They had recently been favoured with the Report of the Departmental Committee upon Vagrancy, and he believed the recommendations were very excellent. The question was, How were these recommendations to be carried out? The committee recommended many things, and amongst others the nationalisation of the system of dealing with tramps. Evidently they all felt that something of the sort was required, and that the method of dealing with this class in the past had been of too local a character. The question was one which really should be taken up by the State and dealt with as a whole. (Applause.) He did not wish to anticipate the discussion, which would take place at a later stage, but it appeared to him that a great deal of destitution existing in commercial centres at present was due to the exodus of the labourers and others from the agricultural districts. There had been a decrease in the population of the rural districts, and the decrease was continued, whereas these men were going to swell the numbers in the large commercial centres where there was perhaps nothing for them to do. It was quite possible that if these people could be induced to remain on the land, there would not be such overcrowding in the large cities and towns of the country. He believed that if there were better cottages and more small holdings created in the country, the lot of the labourers would be better, and that they would be better off than if they had remained upon the list of those who crowded into the large commercial centres. He went on to speak of the benefits which accrued from a cordial change of views at such conferences as that, and accorded the delegates a very

heartly welcome. In concluding, he referred to the retirement of Mr Bircham, remarking that he was sure they were all extremely sorry he was about to leave them, and that they were greatly indebted to him for the kindly way he had treated them in the management of Poor Law affairs in the past. He had endeared himself to the whole of the Guardians with whom he had come into contact, and they deeply regretted the fact that the time for him to retire had arrived. (Applause.)

Mr JAMES MANNING, a member of the Bedwellty Board, then submitted the following paper :—

THE UNEMPLOYED.

BY MR JAMES MANNING,

Guardian of Bedwellty Union.

THE question of the unemployed is of increasing importance year by year, and is undoubtedly one of the most pressing of our social problems, and will have to be dealt with in some very practical form in the near future. The workers of the country are feeling its evil effects more and more year by year, and as the result the middle-aged and the aged are finding it more difficult to get employment. I think you will agree with me that the administration of the Poor Law is becoming more difficult and complicated, and does not meet the present condition of things, if it ever did. To treat all classes without discrimination is, to say the least, unfair to the poor that have rendered lifelong service to the country. We, as Poor Law authorities, want more discrimination and power to treat the different classes according to merit and ability, and also to bring some pressure to bear upon those who have made up their minds to live upon the efforts of others. It is rather a good sign that there is a disposition in the country at present to face the matter, and we can hope for a solution of this problem if the united wisdom of the country is applied. It is a national question, and must be dealt with nationally, for any local effort must be short-lived and very partial with a migrating population of paupers that are breeding

paupers and educating them, and seeking to take advantage of every opportunity to protect themselves under the present constitution of the Poor Law.

We must have a national organisation, national discrimination, and a national system of distribution, so that the migration of the industrious will be unnecessary, and if necessary will be under the control and guidance of some national institution, and the migration of the non-industrious will be made a crime punishable by law, and if they go about will go about with the brand of an idler upon them. The unemployed can be divided into several classes—the men that would work if they could obtain employment, and the men that could work if they would (but won't), and I feel certain that the latter would be greatly diminished if we only dealt with the former in an honest and straightforward way. For several years past a very real and genuine excuse has been created for begging and general necessity for relief. The stories of West Ham have been true in every industrial centre, and have provided many opportunities for the idlers to exploit the public that are disposed to help the real genuine poor, and prejudice against relief has been the result. The causes of the unemployment of so large a percentage of the population are many, and it is often attributed to causes that have very little to do with the question other than to increase its bitterness. Among the causes named and blamed are and have been Free Trade and Protection, the habits of the people, thriftlessness, and drunkenness, and these to some degree rightly so. Nothing too severe can be said against the awful waste of capital that is spent in drink in this country, and I have no doubt that if the £160,000,000 per annum spent in drink was spent in other more useful and profitable employment it would reduce the unemployed problem to a minimum. But all the money spent in drink is not spent by the industrial classes—by far the largest proportion is spent by the well-to-do,

and ought on that account to be more easily adjusted. Take the thriftless. Will any member of the Conference tell me if these people were more industrious that it would help to solve the problem of unemployment, or increase in any way the volume of trade? I think not. I do not want in any way to encourage that kind of thing, but will say that it would relieve many burdens that are hard to be borne, but could not create employment; it would not open new industries; it would not remove the wide disparity between the rich and the poor. Under existing conditions the distance between the rich and the poor is ever widening, and must continue so until a social revolution takes place, which must come in time, and it is to be hoped will come through the awakening of the moral sense of the nation rather than by the continued oppression of the poor, as it has come to some nations that are at present unable to rise above the awful result, and are at present paying the penalty. There are two separate classes to be dealt with, and the class that ought first to be dealt with are the idle rich. These have the remedy in their own hands at present, and could if they would do much to bring about the desired end, if they would take a little less interest in hunting deer and more in cultivating the land for remunerative purposes, or at least let the land now used only for the pleasure of the few be cultivated for the common good. There are also the genuine unemployed that are out of work through no fault of their own; the men that are returned by the varied trades unions of the country and other associations and represent anything from 5 per cent. to 8 per cent. in the depressed periods, and are the people that suffer most in the above circumstances.

There are three methods by which the unemployed are dealt with—I. Charity, of which no one wishes to complain, but it is not the proper treatment for able-bodied men. A man that can work and will, ought not to be demoralised by that kind of treatment.

Charity is only suited to the helpless infant or aged, and society ought to be in a position to deal with the different circumstances in which the masses are found with methods worthy of the most wealthy (and so-called Christian) nation. The helpless ought to be provided for without the taint of pauperism. Then there are the able-bodied that ought to be provided for by emergency works suited to the condition of the particular class thus thrown on the community. And the idlers that are at large and are the parasites of society ought to be dealt with also. If there were works opened as above, and there still remained a class of able-bodied men and women that refused to share the common task, they ought to be arrested and confined in settlements where fair tests should be provided and measures suitable to such cases should at once be put into operation—measures of a moral, educational, and industrial kind and for which inducements to thrift should be afforded and men and women would gain that self-respect which would again make them good citizens.

The earning power of the nation has increased abnormally during the last fifty years, and yet though we have a very large proportion of unemployed the cry of the hungry still ascends. We are told that about twelve millions of our people are always on the verge of want. While we have increased our income from £18 per head per annum to £42 we have all the while been adding to the mass of people that are earning below a living wage, and the distance between the rich and the poor has been widening. Just think of twelve million beings living from hand to mouth, and any depression in trade must plunge hundreds of thousands of them into absolute destitution. Surely this ought not to be, and it will become the duty of every good citizen to help by hand and brain to bring about the necessary reforms. It will become the duty of the State to capture the great sources of income either by bringing them altogether under State control or by

some method of graduated taxation to increase the revenue to such an extent as to be in a position to provide for the less fortunate by a system of old age pensions for the infirm and employment of a useful and necessary nature for the able-bodied. It is my opinion that there could and should be a national system of emergency works in every county, the nature of which would have to be determined by those who know best the needs of that particular district, and should also be suited to the class of workmen affected. In most counties land would be available for agricultural effort and experiment of a national kind that the small farmer is quite unable to attempt for two reasons—first, want of capital ; second, for the want of convenient markets for their produce. This can only be done by the Government taking over the railways and the land ; and the question of the land more than anything is affecting our social life. Private ownership of land is responsible for the housing problem. The want of railway facilities is to a large degree responsible for the excessive tariffs on our present railway systems.

Some time since a Select Committee of the House of Commons inquired into the question of railway rates, and from the evidence we give some specimens of the way the railways treat British produce. Carriage of a ton of apples from Folkestone to London is 24s. 1d. ; carriage of a ton of apples from California to London is 15s. 8d. ; carriage of a ton of British meat, Liverpool to London, is 40s. ; foreign meat would be 25s., and so on. This, I think, goes a great way to prove that it is time that we took these things seriously to heart, and so changed our social economy as to make the wealth-producing industries of the country to produce for the good of the nation and not to pour untold wealth into the pockets of the few, while many millions of our people have to live in penury and be sacrificed by tens of thousands every year in the mad rush to make rich those who already have enough and

to spare. It will be the duty of the present Government to deal with the problem by direct and by still more indirect means, not only by extending a helping hand to the victims of any particular crisis but by endeavouring to prevent the wholesale manufacture of human material destined from youth, if not from the cradle, to a lifelong struggle with unemployment or to a place in the ranks of the unemployable.

It is little known that a Departmental Committee reported in 1902 that there were 21,000,000 acres of waste land in Great Britain, half of which are available for planting of timber; that the proportion of woodlands is smaller in Great Britain than in any other European country except Portugal. Germany, for instance, employs nearly a half million men in afforestation, and makes a profit of about £18,000,000 per annum. Is not this worthy of the serious consideration of a nation that has about a fourth of its acreage lying waste with a very large surplus population continually in a state of pauperism. It is high time we dealt with this problem of unemployment. Every man and woman born into this country has an undoubted right to existence, and as a nation we ought to see to it that they have opportunities fitted to their capacity, and no child should be allowed to drift aimlessly through life. We should as a nation see that they started right with equality of opportunity both for education and employment, and if he or she failed the cause of failure should be properly located and dealt with in a way calculated if possible to remedy.

DISCUSSION.

Mr C. W. BEST (Brecon), who opened the debate, said the paper which had been read was one which provided very great food for thought. The question of the unemployed was a very important and very interesting one, and he was very glad to be able to be present. He agreed in many respects with Mr Manning's ideas as to what should be, but he was obliged to differ entirely with him in other respects—in fact, he considered his paper a socialistic paper

pure and simple. There was one thing about which there appeared to him to be a certain amount of confusion. Mr Manning spoke of the "taint of pauperism," and yet he proposed, as regarded many of these people whom he termed "unemployed," that they should be provided for by State aid. Now, what was a pauper? The word "pauper" meant simply a poor person. If these people were to be provided for by State aid, it did not matter whether they called them "paupers" or "unemployed"—they were poor persons and had a right to State aid, just in the same way as a pauper had to-day. (Hear, hear.) It seemed to him that they might invent a new name, but in the end they arrived at exactly the same state of things. He did not think there was any real taint in the word "pauper" at all. The author of the paper seemed to confuse the vagrant with the ordinary pauper. He thought it would be helpful if Mr Manning would make it quite clear what he did mean by "pauper," and whether he included the vagrant class or only those whose cases came before the Guardians to be relieved by weekly or fortnightly payments. He also agreed with Mr Manning entirely that, as Poor Law authorities, they were not able to exercise enough discretion in the treatment of paupers, and considered that people who became poor by force of circumstances, and who had been industrious and sober throughout their lives, should be dealt with liberally. (Cheers.) He would like to see a system of Old Age Pensions for such, and he saw no reason why it should not be brought about by the aid of the State. At present there were many people belonging to clubs, and if they could get the State to secure and supplement the amount derived from these institutions on the attainment of a certain age, it would be an unmixed good. They knew sometimes that club funds had gone the wrong way, and that poor people who had been looking forward to receiving an allowance had found on retiring that the allowance had not been forthcoming, the funds having disappeared, or being insufficient. They had even had such cases at Brecon. Then there were other cases in which the circumstances were such that the Guardians felt such cases ought to go to the Workhouse. The Guardians accordingly passed a resolution saying that they could not be relieved unless such people went to the Workhouse. And what happened? The relieving officer, if they were "destitute," had by law to relieve them, and the Guardians were powerless. He thought there was need for an alteration of the law in that respect, so that they could discriminate in cases of that sort, and where there were deserving poor, they should be liberally helped, and not on the low scale they were at present. (Applause.) He was no believer in extravagance, but he considered that the sober and industrious poor should be helped to the same extent as it would cost the Guardians to keep them in the Workhouse, and those who were not sober and industrious should go into the Workhouse, or get no help at all. (Hear, hear.) Mr Manning also spoke of paupers educating or bringing up their children as paupers, and so

creating a permanent race of paupers, but in this statement he thought that the vagrant must be meant and not the ordinary pauper. He considered the Report which had been issued by the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy an excellent one. There the question of the vagrant, as against the unemployed, was dealt with very thoroughly. Comparatively speaking, however, this was really a very small question. The maximum estimate of the number of vagrants in the whole of England and Wales was about 80,000 in a population of, say, 30,000,000. So that the vagrant question should not be difficult of treatment. There was another point he wished to deal with, as one who had had some experience of workmen, and it was this: Mr Manning averred that the cause of the unemployed problem, being of increasing importance year by year, was the result of middle-aged men finding it more difficult to get employment. He had had thirty years' practical experience of workmen in one form or another, and his deliberate opinion was that the fact that aged or middle-aged workmen were not able to get employment was largely caused by the operations of trades unionism and of the Employers' Liability Act. Both trades unionism and the Employers' Liability Act were doubtless excellent in principle, but there could not be a doubt that the practical working out of the principles had had the result of throwing the middle-aged and older workmen out of employment in increasing numbers. Then there was another point Mr Manning made. Private ownership of land, he said, was responsible for the housing problem. He (the speaker) did not see that, and he denied it entirely. The difficulty of the housing problem was this—that speaking generally, houses could not be put up to pay three per cent. interest and be let at the rates at which workmen could pay for them. And the reason was the largely increased cost of building due to the increase in cost of labour, and also of materials corresponding with the increase of the wages of the men employed in erecting them. The land represented but a small proportion of the cost of a workman's dwelling, so that it was entirely wrong to say that private ownership was responsible for the creation of the housing problem. He knew it was very often so stated, but he thought that people generally had lost sight of the fact that it arose owing to the difficulty of building houses at such a price that would pay even such a moderate rate of interest as he had referred to. It had been the custom for large landowners in many cases to build cottages for the workmen employed on their estates, and let them for a nominal rental of, say, 2s. per week, which was not sufficient to pay two and a half per cent. on the present cost and upkeep of an ordinary cottage. The idea was good, though the method might, and in most cases did, result in a reduction of wages in that particular neighbourhood. These estate workmen were paid, say, sixteen or eighteen shillings a week and their cottage or the equivalent, and that fixed the rate of wages, practically speaking, for the neighbourhood. If a man in estate employment had the privilege

of residing in a cottage which was honestly worth 4s. a week, it was clear that the man who was not an estate workman must pay a similar amount if he was going to get an equivalent cottage, and the result was that they saw in many places almost side by side good cottages for workmen and cottages which were next door to hovels. He did not think the question was going to be dealt with in the way proposed by Mr Manning. There was one other thing Mr Manning said, namely, that it was very unfair that a workman who was willing to work should suffer by reason of a period of depression. He would ask him who was going to provide for him during the period of depression? When there was depression everybody suffered—not only the workmen but everybody engaged in business or dependent in any way on general prosperity. Did Mr Manning mean that in a period of depression the workman was to be helped at the expense of those who were also losing while the depression lasted? That was evidently what he meant. It was all very well to talk about the idle rich, but there were not such a great number of them. The middle classes were the people after all who had to bear the brunt of the rates and taxes, and although he was quite willing to do his share to help the poor man who honestly sought employment, he did not see why the principles of political economy should be set on one side by, as it were, a single stroke of the pen as had been proposed by the author of the paper. At the same time, he acknowledged with great satisfaction the attention which had been given to the subject, although they might differ radically as to the way in which Mr Manning proposed to bring about the desirable end they all had in view. (Applause.)

Rev. D. OWEN (Builth) said there were two Acts of Parliament which concerned the working men. The one was a blessing, while the other was a curse, and they ought to allow the public to judge between them. In the year 1846, Sir Robert Peel introduced and passed a Bill abolishing the duty on imported raw materials. That was a blessing. But there was another Free Trade Act passed in 1860 abolishing the duty on 716 manufactured articles, which represented 716 trades. How many of those present, he wondered, knew that? (Laughter.) In other words, no less than 716 trades had been ruined by the passing of the Act to which he had referred. And yet, in the face of this, they blamed the men for being on the road. Let them rather blame themselves for backing that Act. He enumerated a number of trades which he alleged had been ruined by Free Trade, and challenged any one to prove that the passing of such measures as that to which he had alluded had been otherwise than a curse to the men engaged. Mr Manning, he contended, had not proved his case. He should have spoken about Free Trade and Protection, whereas he had proved nothing. He (Mr Owen) had proved, on the contrary, that the workmen had been ruined. They should propose to foreign nations—the French and Germans—that trade should be free on both sides. In that

respect he was a Free Trader. But if they were going to allow the foreigner to put his hands into their pockets, they should put theirs into those of the foreigner ; or in other words, they should tax his manufactured goods. He did not propose that they should tax corn or wheat, but he did think that they ought to tax imported manufactured articles, and so provide employment for British workmen, who would then have so much to get that they would hardly know what to do with the money. As for the remedy proposed by Mr Manning in the shape of the nationalisation of the land, he very much questioned whether he would practise what he preached if he owned it. (Laughter.) A house or cottage which could be built for £100 two hundred years ago now cost £600. The question then was, Could they afford to spend £600 on a house and let it for £10? Personally, he did not think they could.

Mr LEWIS N. POWELL (Llandilo) said he represented what was practically an agricultural Union, and added that the question there was that of the tramp. He had been asked to read a resolution passed by his Board the previous Saturday, and with their permission he would have much pleasure in doing so. It was as follows :— "That in the opinion of this Board the Conference should secure the co-operation of the several Unions so as to impress upon the Government the necessity of dealing with the Tramp question forthwith."

The CHAIRMAN, interposing, explained that the Brecon Board of Guardians had passed a similar resolution on Friday fully agreeing with the Report of the Departmental Committee, and that it had been sent up to headquarters.

Mr J. W. JOHNSTON (Chairman of the Swansea Board) said he would like to express his admiration of the way in which Mr Manning had attempted to tackle so big a question as that of the unemployed—a question which had exercised, and would exercise for a long time, the best minds of the country. They could all see the sores on the body politic, but they could not all see the remedy. Mr Manning recommended the nationalisation of land. He might be right. But just as in their hospitals doctors differed, so in these matters did their social reformers. For his part, added the speaker, he believed the number of unemployed might be continuously lessened were the problem of the underfed children, upon which they listened to such an able paper by Professor Mackenzie the previous day, properly dealt with, so that most of these poor, neglected waifs might, under the influence of a better environment, grow up and be useful members of society, instead of becoming, as too many now did, mere hangers-on. With the statement of Mr Manning, that paupers educated paupers, he entirely agreed. He knew personally of cases where, both as regarded outdoor and indoor assistance, there were three generations in receipt of relief. Parents became paupers, but as soon as they got a chance, instead of depending upon themselves, they sought refuge in the Workhouse

on the slightest indication of trade depression, and taught their children to emulate their example. That was, he thought, a condition of things which ought certainly not to exist. (Hear, hear.) He sincerely trusted that a practical and effective remedy of the evils they were discussing would soon be forthcoming. (Applause.)

Mr D. W. LEWIS (Llandilo) also spoke.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (Brecon) thought the paper a good one, on the whole, although he did not quite agree with it on some points. The question of the unemployed was one which had occupied the attention of Boards of Guardians for a number of years. It had also been taken up in Parliament, and a Committee of Inquiry had been appointed. He did not know what the latter had done, but it seemed to him that the vagrants were practically masters of the situation. With regard to the unemployed he was strongly of opinion that they ought to differentiate and divide them into two classes. There were genuine unemployed in the country, and these ought certainly to be helped both by the State and by the Boards of Guardians. He ventured to say that practically nine out of every ten of the unemployed were men who never had worked, and never would if they could help it. What the cause might be he did not know. Various explanations had been put forward from time to time. They had heard a good many advanced that day, and every one was free to form his or her own opinion. His own view was this: that, with regard to the majority, they were people who had never been taught to work when they were young. According to the law at present, children were kept at school until they were thirteen or fourteen years of age, when they were beginning to feel that they were men and women and above soiling their hands with the drudgery of work. He thought they would agree with him that that was one of the causes of unemployment. On the other hand, they had men who were princes of commerce who had had to start work at an early age, while others, who had also started early, were to-day holding positions of responsibility and trust in various parts of the country. Mr Manning had spoken about getting people back from the town to the land. Well, they had now had experience of the Allotment Act, which had been tried in many places without any particular success. What was the reason of people having gone from the land? It was because the farmers could not afford to pay them, and so had been obliged to resort to machinery to do their work, with the result that those who had been displaced had been compelled to seek work in the industrial centres. In his opinion the idea of bringing people back to the land would only be bringing them back to starvation.

Rev. H. HUGHES (Neath) agreed with the paper on the housing problem, and expressed the opinion that if cottages were built in a proper manner the working man ought to have a splendid house, while his environments should be as good as those of anybody else. If they could only utilise the twenty-one million acres of land

which was now lying waste, and make a profit on it as they did in Germany, it would be the means of affording a great amount of relief to the unemployed of the country. He trusted, however, that whatever was done the Guardians would have power to discriminate and help those who were really in need of assistance. (Hear, hear.) He quite agreed that there were tramps who would be tramps for ever—going from one Workhouse to another. They had had in the Workhouse at Neath as many as 900 of these men seeking relief, and still they kept on coming. They knew when they got a good place in the Workhouse. In this connection he would like to see each of the Unions adopting the system which had been put into operation at Cardiff, where tramps were detained for two days instead of one. He believed if this were done it would be a great help in keeping them from their Workhouses. At any rate, he had been informed by one of the Cardiff Guardians that the number of tramps there had been materially reduced since the two days' system was adopted. They had to be just to the ratepayers, and just to the poor, and therefore he urged them, whatever they did, to be at all times impartial. They were one common brotherhood, and could all co-operate in the effort to elevate their fellow-men to a higher state of life. He did not wish to try to advise them as to the best means by which the end they had in view could be attained, but they could all do what was right. Personally, he was very thankful to Mr Manning for his paper.

Mrs H. D. WILLIAMS (Swansea) did not regard the question of the unemployed as being so much a women's question as that of underfed children. That it had an important bearing upon the course of Poor Law administration she was willing to admit, but they had to walk very warily towards a solution. They could not close their eyes to the fact that the unemployable did constitute a very large proportion of the unemployed, and it was to separate these men who did not want to work, from the honest labourer who was, for the time being, upset by economic changes, that they must direct their efforts. (Cheers.) For herself, she thought that labour colonies would do much to mitigate the trouble. The land of Great Britain had not lost its fertility. Farming, intelligently directed, could still be made to pay, as they could see from the great state in which our agricultural landlords still lived. Let them get a proportion of their population back upon the land; let them, as the Prime Minister said before the General Election, make the land the treasure-house of the nation instead of the pleasure-ground of the rich, and they would quickly reduce the number of casuals in their Workhouses. It was from the system of landlordism, that kept so much of the country's soil fallow, that the cause of much of our poverty sprang, and those at that Conference ought boldly to recognise it. (Applause.)

Mr J. J. AMES (Cardiff) was very pleased to hear the paper, though nearly the whole of the speakers dealing with the question

seemed to have mixed up the tramp with the unemployed, which were separate things altogether. The tramp, when he tramped, was engaged in the employment which he had been brought up to—(laughter)—and it was his purpose to get from one Workhouse to another as quickly as possible, to know the best, and to suit himself. The question, however, which had been brought before them was an entirely different one. Unemployed were people who lived in towns or at large or small centres, who resided in them permanently, and suffered from lack of work. In Cardiff they had suffered largely from unemployment. The unemployed should be divided into classes, with different grades in each. In the first place, there were a number of unemployed men who would work if they could, and who would not mind at what they worked, so long as it provided a means of subsistence. These were a small portion, and, in his opinion, they should be sympathised with. (Hear, hear.) The next class was a larger class, and consisted of people who wanted employment, and would take it, providing they knew the hours and the rate of pay, but if they did not know these things, or were not satisfied with the conditions, they would not work at all. The next class were the class of men who would work, perhaps, two or three days during the week, and consider that sufficient. There were many of these men to be seen in the streets of Cardiff. They pretended they wanted work, and when they saw somebody coming along who was likely to offer them employment, they ran off for fear that they might get it. (Laughter.) The next class consisted of people who were the parasites of the community—men who would work for a day, and then, as soon as they were paid, met some other men, and got drunk; so long as they got a slice of bread and cheese, which was comparatively good, that suited them very well for the day. Their wives and families had to go to the parish for assistance, and although the Guardians charged it as a loan, the men knew perfectly well that it would never be repaid. It seemed to him that the first class referred to should be helped; and when he said “helped,” he meant that their wives and children should not be allowed to starve. Those were the *bona-fide* men out of employment, and who were honestly looking for it. They had in Cardiff in the particular district in which he lived what they called the South Ward Associated Charities—that was to say, the ministers and laymen of all denominations amalgamated in one body to see that charity was not abused, and that the wives and children of those who deserved help were not allowed to go to the parish for assistance. This arrangement was a most useful one, inasmuch as the ministers of the churches and chapels knew the different members of their congregations. Often they found persons attending church in the morning and chapel in the evening. They got references from the clergyman of the church to say that they knew them as honest, respectable people for so many years, and that they regularly attended his church. Similar letters of recommendation were obtained from

the pastor of the chapel, and thus these people got assisted by the charities of both bodies. He considered them the parasites of the population, and that they ought to be severely dealt with. No punishment, in fact, could be too severe for men who allowed their wives and families to become parasites, and to prey upon the rate-paying portion of the people.

Mr W. P. JAMES (Pontypool) favoured State aid for the unemployed under certain conditions, and suggested that arrangements might be made for dealing with the question, either in every county or group of counties. He regretted, however, that they were not able to discriminate at present in the case of *bona-fide* working men. These men should be given every facility to obtain work, and not called upon to perform a task before they left the Workhouse in the morning. (Hear, hear.)

Mr EDWARD HOPKINS (Bridgend) stated that this question had been sprung upon the country, but he hoped and trusted that the time was not far distant when a practical solution would be forthcoming. He agreed with Mr Manning on most points. In the district which he represented, they were mostly agricultural people, who knew very little indeed of the conditions in the mining districts. He believed it was perfectly true that a great number of men were out of employment through the passing of the Compensation Act. They had people in their Workhouses to-day more able to work than many of those in that room, but they were out of employment owing to the age limit. Large numbers were in receipt of outdoor relief. Some time ago the Bridgend Board determined to clear an old brook which had been an eyesore for years. In fact, he did not think that any respectable man would think of working there. Yet they had been pestered with applications from people whom he never dreamt would apply. They said they would almost die rather than seek parish relief. They wanted work, no matter what it was. Being a Guardian, and living in the centre of the district, he considered it his duty to look up those people who were in receipt of relief and able to work. Every one who was offered work accepted it. They had others there, however, who would work one day and spend the money in drink. The speaker next went on to refer to the importance of the land question, and declared that if only the State would take this matter seriously in hand, a solution would be provided in a very short time.

Colonel GARNONS WILLIAMS did not agree with a great deal of what Mr Manning had said, although he admitted that he had given them much to think over. He thought he had wisely put the vagrancy question on one side, as this had been very ably dealt with by the Parliamentary Committee which had been sitting. And he could not help thinking that if the Government would bring in a Bill on the lines of the majority Report, the problem would, to a large extent, be solved. The question of the unemployed was raised in the Report, which he thought every one would agree was a very

valuable one, although he was afraid the question of the unemployed would be with them even after an Act of that sort had been passed. Unemployment was really due to the enormous population of the country, and the only way he could see to solve it was to create more employment. He did not wish to go into the question of Tariff Reform, but he was quite clear on this point—that it would be very much better that men should be employed and pay more for articles, than be unemployed and not be able to buy articles at all. It was in that connection that he wanted to call attention to one point in the paper. "Take the thriftless," said Mr Manning in one part of his paper. "Will any member of the Conference tell me if these people were more industrious that it would help to solve the problem of unemployment, or increase in any way the volume of trade? I think not." Personally he disagreed with him. He believed himself that if people were more industrious than they were, if they did not "go slow" as they did in the building, say, and other trades, but worked to the best of their ability, and were allowed to work to the best of their ability by their trade unions, we should get a much larger volume of trade. He believed in endeavouring to drive out of the market a large number of cheap articles which came over from America, so that the poor man might have work in this country. Cottages would then be built much more quickly, and they would be able to provide a better class of homes than there was at present. Another point upon which he desired to touch was that with regard to emergency work. This sounded very well, no doubt. It seemed a great thing to be able to find employment for people, but the question was—Could they find the work that was required to be done in every part of the country? He did not believe they could without great cost, and even if it were done, he did not think it would be the best way of dealing with the matter. He believed that the tendency of finding work for people was to make them paupers, whatever name they might like to give them. Those who had read the Report of the Commission of 1832 would remember that it was this very question, finding employment for the unemployed, which brought them almost to a financial crisis at that time. They must take every care to see that they did not depress wages but try to raise them, so that men would be in a position to provide for themselves. In 1832 there were Unions paying as much as 20s. in the £ in rates due to the very cause to which he had referred, namely, finding employment for people. If they went back to a system of that sort they would be doing a big amount of mischief. What they wanted to do was to make people self-respecting and self-supporting. As to going back to the land, he would like to ask how, if a farmer who had been brought up to the work could not make it pay, it was going to be made profitable by a townsman or others who had not been brought up to it? The question of the nationalisation of land was a very serious one. If the land was to be confiscated they might begin to con-

fiscate other things as well, but if it was to be paid for at a proper rate he very much doubted whether better results could be obtained than at the present time. It was not out of the land that these large incomes were made, as a rule; there were other ways. Moreover, the incomes from the land were not so very numerous. He also took exception to the question of railway rates being dragged into the paper. It had been very much thrashed out in Parliament and by a committee, and he would not have mentioned it only that he thought it was very misleading. He could not check the figures brought forward by Mr Manning as specimens of the way the railways treated British produce, but even if they were correct every tradesman knew perfectly well that it was cheaper to deal with a shipload of things than with a single truck. He thought the comparison most misleading, and that figures of that sort ought not to be put forward without some qualification. It had been shown that the railway companies, as regards foreign produce, were not nearly as bad as they were represented to be. He was not there to represent the companies, but they were business people and did things in the cheapest way they could. If they could not get trade in one way they got it in another. But they did not try to discriminate against their own countrymen. They all had the same object in view, and his feeling was as strong as Mr Manning's. He was in favour of getting rid of the unemployed and of giving men the very best conditions they could in the world. The difficulty was as to the way in which it was to be done. (Applause.)

Mr MICHAEL DAVIES (Bridgend and Cowbridge) said there were men of fifty-five in their Union out of work because of their age. He thought this was the most serious matter they had to deal with, and he maintained that old age pensions must come whatever they might think about it. Men who were thrown out of work at this age ought to be given something, and allowed to live by Act of Parliament. They had deserving poor who were forced to seek relief through illness and things of that kind, and it was far better, he thought, for them to give these 6s. or 7s. a week outside than to maintain them in the Union at a cost of 7s. or 8s. As far as vagrants were concerned, he thought they might leave them to the magistrates, and give them more work. At Bridgend for some years they used to give them tickets for lodgings, and the result was that they had them in droves. But since they had imposed a test, and had given them something to do in the morning, the number had fallen off very much.

Mrs NORMAN (Cardiff) felt that this was a woman's question, because the women and children suffered through the men being out of employment. There was a class—the professional tramp—which it was hopeless to try and reform. Then there was the respectable unemployed, and how to deal with these was a very grave problem now. It seemed to have arisen within the last two or three years, and to be due to two measures intended for the benefit of the working men, namely, the Workmen's Compensation Act and the

Employers' Liability Act. The latter, she believed, was a good thing, and it was a pity the employers could not see it. Of course it would mean ruin unless they were insured; but unfortunately, instead of insuring, they discharged all their elderly men—men perhaps, whose sight was slightly defective—and that class of people was thrown upon the country. What little they might have saved was soon expended, and they were obliged to come upon the rates. The tramp class were people who were not deserving of sympathy or help, and she thought that each case should be looked into very carefully. She could scarcely think that the unemployment was really due to the passing of the Employers' Liability Act, because the risk, where there was any, might be covered by the payment of an insurance premium. If only employers would insure and keep their old men on, much of the difficulty would be met. With regard to trades unions, she thought it most unfair that they should insist upon employers paying men who measured their work the same as those who were industrious. At the same time, she admitted that there were workmen who were naturally slow, without any intention of doing any injustice to those by whom they were engaged. The effect of all this pressed unfairly on the employers, and the result was that when trade was slack these men were sent adrift and thrown upon their clubs, whereas if they were industrious, an employer would probably hesitate before sacrificing them, preferring to retain their services if only on short time. If trades unions would only consider this aspect of the matter so that they could do something to act fairly to the employers of labour, it would help considerably to solve the unemployed question. Let them therefore try to avoid turning out unskilled workmen. In this connection she pointed out that a great deal depended upon the children, and suggested the advisability of forming associations of foremen, teachers, and others, so that the children and young men might be taught how degrading it was to become a pauper. They would then be filled with hope, and go about looking for work; but at present, finding it difficult to get employment week after week, they tramped about, got discouraged, and then joined one another, and unconsciously became confirmed idlers. If such an association could be formed to take these children in hand and help them in every way, it would prevent a lot of young people developing into idle men. (Hear, hear.) As Guardians they should also do their utmost to see that the children of outdoor paupers were placed in the hands of people who would take a real interest in them, and put them where they could learn something which would enable them to earn their living in after-life. (Applause.)

Mr T. DUTFIELD (Chairman of the Newport Board) said that according to a statement made some time ago there were 12,000,000 people on the verge of starvation. But although the unemployed problem was a very serious one, he did not think this estimate could be correct, for he could not think that there was a third of the

population in that condition. He knew this as a member of the Unemployed Distress Committee at Newport—that when the Bill was passed many people said it would be no use whatever. They found it, however, this use—that it enabled them in large centres of population to open offices where the unemployed could go and register themselves. By this means, and by the co-operation of the various managers and employers of labour throughout the district, they were able to offer many of these people employment in the same class of work which they had followed, and to find employment, moreover, for people who wanted it. Although he was not going to say that the payment received was equal to that prescribed by the trades unions, it was very reasonable and very fair—perhaps 6s. instead of 6s. 6d., or something like that. Those men who could not go to work, because their trades unions prevented them accepting that rate of wages, went to increase the number of unemployed. He did not say whether this was right or wrong, but such was the case. They were able, however, to find employment for three-fourths of those who applied, and he thought it was a useful thing that there were such offices as those to which he had referred, because they were able to put advertisements in the papers, send out circulars, and approach employers of labour, who assisted them by giving the men employment if they were adapted to it, and by furnishing them with particulars as to the rate of wages paid. He agreed with the writer of the paper as regarded old age pensions, and he hoped the day would come when the proposal would be carried into effect. But still, while so much was heard of old age pensions, they seemed to lose sight of a subject that was under discussion many years ago—namely, compulsory national assurance. (Applause.) There should certainly be some system to compel men to join some friendly society and make provision for their old age. With regard to the provision of suitable emergency works in all districts, it was a very easy matter to talk about, but a very difficult one to carry out. Because, what was “suitable work”? Supposing, for instance, there was a great strike on: how were they going to find suitable employment for the colliers? Or, supposing again, in the case of a large town there were people out who had been following a particular kind of employment suited to that locality, how were they going to find work for these? As to the suggestion to bring people back to the land, they would find that it was difficult for a man to make as good a living in the country as in the towns. One would think there was a great demand for labour in the country, whereas, as a matter of fact, that was not so. In the agricultural districts farmers in recent years had been obliged to use labour-saving machinery owing to the prevalence of low prices and foreign competition. And that being the case, it would be useless to send men back to the land, because farmers could not now be induced to go back to hand labour. They found machinery much more economical, and if that were not so, they could not live as they did

at the present time. It was a common idea that if a man only got about ten acres of land his fortune was made for life. That was altogether a delusion. At any rate, a man would have to work very hard indeed about the ten acres in order to make his living. Having touched upon the difficulty of finding work for thousands of vagrants on the land, Mr Dutfield remarked that he thought Mr Manning had acted wisely in practically leaving this class of men out of the paper, inasmuch as it was very undesirable that they should be confounded with the unemployed. There were no doubt some honest working men amongst the tramps, but they were a very small proportion; in fact, there would be no difficulty in dealing with them on the lines suggested if they were given some sort of ticket or certificate to pass from one place to another. The vagrancy question might be left alone, but he hoped the Government would take up the whole subject and deal with it.

Mr THOMAS WATKINS (Pontypool) pointed out that permissive legislation had been of little benefit in the past, and with regard to the treatment of vagrants, said that if they took the various Unions in South Wales and Monmouthshire they would find either that they had not got adequate accommodation, or if they had, that they did not use it. He felt that if the recommendations which had been made on the subject were made permissive, they would share the same fate as the present law with regard to vagrants. If any good was to be done at all, the State should make the provision.

Mr L. W. FRANCIS (Pontardawe) did not agree with the suggestion of some of the previous speakers that a greater task should be given to vagrants at the Workhouse, as he contended that the proposed remedy would be worse than the disease, inasmuch as a great number of tramps would not then come into the House at all. This would be all very well from a standpoint of strict economy, but they should bear in mind that the Workhouse served a double purpose with respect to the habitual tramp, however undesirable and costly his presence there might be. The speaker felt sure that the absence of the tramp from the highways and by-ways, especially of rural districts, in summer evenings was a source of satisfaction and safety to the community. It was not very pleasant for farmers and householders to realise that their out-houses, hayricks, &c., were made the sleeping quarters for tramps, who invariably created mischief in some form or other. He would give them an instance of the liberties some of these men took in the country districts. One of them called at a house in the outskirts of Pontardawe only a few days ago and asked for help. As this was not readily forthcoming, he put forward a demand for food, at the same time brandishing a stick at the woman who occupied the premises, and who was unfortunately alone at the time. She was naturally terrified, and was eventually glad to comply with the demand of the man in order to get rid of him. Now this occurred within about half a mile of the Pontardawe Workhouse, and if tramps took such liberties when a

Workhouse was within easy reach, what could they expect in remote places? He could not at present see that they could do anything to lessen the tramp evil except urge that the recommendations of the Commission on Vagrants should be put into practical operation at the earliest possible moment.

Mr MANNING, who was warmly received on rising to wind up the debate, thanked the various speakers for the way in which they had dealt with him. One of them had made reference to him as a Socialist. Well, he belonged to one of the most conservative bodies—the Bedwellty Methodists—and he got his socialism from that and from the New Testament. One friend (Mr Best) opposed the position he took up on the housing problem, and wanted to say that a corporation had not got as much common-sense as a private individual. He thought that was a very unfair position to take up. As corporations they could deal with the housing problem upon a business basis quite as well as any individual in the community—as effectively and as remuneratively. If they did, he believed the problem would be solved.

Mr BEST : Pardon me, sir, but I did not say anything about corporations not having as much sense as an individual.

Mr MANNING : Excuse me, sir, but I think I'm correct.

Mr BEST : That is not so.

Mr MANNING said he would leave it to the Conference to decide.

Mr BEST : I said nothing about corporations.

Mr MANNING : Then my friend withdraws from his position. (No, no.)

Mr BEST : You said that private ownership of land is responsible for the housing problem, and I maintained and will maintain that it is not remunerative to build houses.

Mr MANNING, proceeding, said some one had referred to the Compensation Act, which was said to be responsible for a great deal of unemployment. His answer to that was that the Act was passed as a protection to the men who were affected by it. Other speakers had made special reference to emergency works. As far, however, as emergency work was concerned, the paper dealt with it from a national and not from a local standpoint, because they would remember that at the end he had referred to the 20,000,000 acres of land which were lying idle in the country. He did not think that it would be wise, even from a national point of view, to attempt the cultivation of the whole of this at any one particular period in their history, but he did think that a national project might be started and carried out over a period of years, and that, he believed, would raise the question they had been discussing out of its present position, and enable them to provide work for a large proportion of the unemployed during the period of depression. Those were all the points he proposed dealing with on that occasion. In conclusion, he again thanked the delegates for the patient and courteous hearing which they had given him. (Applause.)

The CHAIRMAN, in moving a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Manning for his paper, said they might disagree with it on different points, but it had produced an interesting discussion. And he thought it was a very excellent thing that they should meet together to discuss subjects of this kind. He could not follow Mr Manning all through, but he had made some very excellent points, and he was sure they were all very much obliged to him for his efforts.

Mr T. DUTFIELD seconded.

Rev. D. OWEN and others supported, and the resolution was unanimously adopted.

On the motion of Mr HERBERT LLOYD, seconded by Mrs RICHARDS, and supported by Mr DUTFIELD—who spoke of the good work done at the Conferences—Mr Owen Price was also cordially thanked for his services in the Chair.

This concluded the proceedings of the Conference.

Northern District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT, COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF CUMBERLAND, DURHAM, NORTH-
UMBERLAND, AND WESTMORLAND, HELD AT THE
KESWICK HOTEL, KESWICK, ON THE 17TH AND
18TH JULY 1906.

President—Mr R. AFFLECK, J.P.,

Chairman, Gateshead Board of Guardians.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

* Guardians specially delegated by their Boards.

CUMBERLAND.

BOOTLE—

- *Lang, David.
- *Huggins, Thomas.

CARLISLE—

- *Waterton, Rev. Canon (Chairman).
- *Chalker, Mrs.
- *Buchanan, Mrs Nigel.

COCKERMOUTH—

- *Price, James.
- *Ross, Joseph G.
- *Lloyd Wilson, Mrs.
- *King, Miss.
- Hartley, Miss.
- Carey, Thos.
- Marshall, John.
- Kennedy, Rev. G.

WHITEHAVEN—

- *Curwen, Rev. A. F. (Chairman).
- *Ireland, Wm.
- *White, James.
- Batty, J.

DURHAM.

AUCKLAND—

- *Adams, Samuel (Clerk).
- *Brown, Richd. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Franks, Benjamin.
- *Lax, Arthur.

CHESTER-LE-STREET—

- *Brown, William.
- Cook, Wm.
- Marley, R. B. (Assistant Clerk).

GATESHEAD—

- *Affleck, Robert, J.P. (Chairman).
- *Craighill, George, J.P. (Clerk).
- *Richardson, William.
- *Smith, George.

LANCHESTER—

- *Huntley, Edward.
- *Pattison, Jas.
- *Ritson, W. H. (Clerk).
- *Wood, H. C.

SEDFIELD—

- *Lockey, A.
- *Clark, W. H.
- *Robinson, J.
- *Lodge, J. W. (Clerk).

SOUTH SHIELDS—

- *Batey, Jos. (Chairman).
- *Scott, L.
- *Gill, Rev. J.
- Martin, Jos.

SUNDERLAND—

- *Fryers, C. W. (Vice-Chairman).
- *Nicholson, J. M.
- *Thompson, Robert (Clerk).
- West, Rev. G. Algernon.

WEARDALE—

- *Milburn, E.
- *Thompson, John (Clerk).
- *Tweddle, Wm.

NORTHUMBERLAND.

ALNWICK—

- *Walton, H. W. (Clerk).

CASTLEWARD—

- *Walker, Rev. Canon (Vice-Chairman).

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE—

- *Atkinson, James (Clerk).
- *Davidson, John (Vice-Chairman).
- *Hopper, J. W.
- *Stableforth, Chas. T. (Chairman).
- Wood, Wm.
- Gibson, J. W. (ex-Clerk).

TYNEMOUTH—

- *Oliver, G.
- *Hall, G.
- *Scott, Septs. (Clerk).
- *Soulsby, J.

WESTMORLAND.

KENDAL—

- *Cropper, The Hon. Mrs.
- *Gill, Edward (Vice-Chairman).

N.B.—These were appointed representatives, but were unable to attend.

VISITORS.

Tenner-Fust, H., L.G.B. Inspector.

Elias, W. P., Assist. L.G.B. Inspector.

Moorsom, Wm., Ret. L.G.B. Inspector.

Marshall, Mrs.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

CUMBERLAND.—Alston-with-Garrigill, Brampton, Longtown, and Penrith.

DURHAM.—Darlington, Durham, Easington, Hartlepool, Houghton-le-Spring, Stockton, and Teesdale.

NORTHUMBERLAND.—Belford, Bellingham, Berwick-on-Tweed, Glendale, Haltwhistle, Hexham, Morpeth, and Rothbury.

WESTMORLAND.—KENDAL (Representatives appointed), East Ward and West Ward.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

PAGE

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN ACT, 1905. By Rev. G. ALGERNON WEST, *Vice-Chairman, Sunderland Distress Committee*

124

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. By Mr SAMUEL ADAMS, *Clerk to the Guardians, Auckland Union*

158

TUESDAY, 17TH JULY.

Rev. Canon WALKER, in opening the proceedings, said he had first of all to explain why the date of meeting was changed. The meeting was originally fixed for 10th and 11th July, but when it was announced that there was to be a royal visit to Newcastle, he received so many intimations from Boards of Guardians in Northumberland and Durham that he thought it desirable to call a meeting of the Committee, and they then decided to avoid these dates and fix it for 17th and 18th July. This was very inconvenient to the hotel people here, and they were very much indebted to them for letting them change the date. The change of date, he was sorry to say, had deprived them of one of the most regular and useful members in the Hon. Mrs Cropper—(hear, hear)—who had in the interval arranged to go to London and had made an engagement which she could not very well put off. He also had to apologise for the absence of Mr J. W. Coulson, Clerk to the South Shields Union, the selected speaker on the subject to be dealt with to-morrow, who had just lost a near relative. Mr Coulson had, however, sent them a substitute—Mr Wade, Chairman of the South Shields Union. Their President in his address would tell them the result of the meetings of the Committee which they appointed last year to deal with phthisical cases, and it was only for him to say that they held two or three meetings on the subject. It was having these meetings and having to print special circulars which caused them to get on the wrong side of the book in their accounts, and they were obliged to put an extra sixpence upon the contributions this year. That was all he had to say, except to hope that they would have a very useful Conference, and to explain that the Committee thought that two papers would be better than three, giving the delegates an opportunity of having a holiday in the afternoon. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT said he was very pleased to welcome the Conference once more to meet at Keswick. The weather had been unpropitious up to now, but he hoped the clouds would roll away and that they would be able to enjoy the beauties outside. Before he read his address he wanted to report upon the meetings of the Committee they appointed last year to go into the question of providing a sanatorium for phthisical cases. That Committee had two or three meetings in Newcastle, and the result of those meetings was that they formulated a certain number of questions which they sent to each Union in the four northern counties. He was sorry to say that the results arising from these circulars had been very ungratifying, seeing the enthusiastic way in which the suggestion was received at their Conference at Bowness. He, for one, certainly looked for a more hopeful response to these circulars. There were 39 Unions in the four Northern counties to which the circular was sent with the following results:—In Cumberland there were 9 Unions: from 2

they had no replies, 4 were unfavourable, 3 undecided, and none favourable. In Durham there were 15 Unions: they had received no response from 6, 4 were unfavourable, 3 said they had made other provision, and 2 were favourable. In Northumberland there were 12 Unions: they had no response from 2, 7 were unfavourable, 3 were undecided, but said they were making inquiries, though up to now they had sent no further communication. In Westmoreland there were 3 Unions: they had received no reply from 2, and 1 was favourable. So that out of 39 Unions only 3 were favourable to the scheme—2 in Durham and 1 in Westmoreland. As regards his Board at Gateshead, they felt very much upon this, and they were practically determined, even supposing they had to go single-handed, to provide a suitable sanatorium to cope with and combat one of the most serious scourges which affected this country—that of phthisis. (Hear, hear.) He only hoped that Westmoreland, which had one Union favourable, would adopt the same enthusiastic method, and that, even if they had to stand single-handed, they would provide a sanatorium. (Hear, hear.) No doubt, from the medical evidence before them at the present time, there was a unanimity of opinion that phthisical cases, if taken and treated properly in their early stages, phthisis in a few years would be a thing of the past. Medical science had the same fight some years ago with typhus, and that as regards this country was a thing of the past. Medical men were all agreed that if sanatoria were provided and phthisical cases taken in their early stages, this most dreadful scourge would in a few years become a thing of the past. (Hear, hear.)

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

Mr AFFLECK then proceeded with his presidential address. He said:—

Those of us who were at last year's Conference will remember that we had a very able paper from Mr George Hogg, Vice-Chairman of the Tynemouth Union, upon the subject of underfed children attending public elementary schools. Mr Hogg's paper dealt with the Order issued by the Local Government Board on the subject, and also with the Circular-Letter of the Board of Education. In the present session of Parliament, a Bill has passed its second reading, making provision for the feeding of underfed children attending public schools, and has been referred to a Select Committee of Members of the House of Commons, who have heard evidence from various parts of the country on the subject. It is by no means impossible that the duty of feeding underfed children will be imposed upon the local educational authorities. Personally, I think this would be a mistake, as the local educational authorities have not the relief machinery and officers possessed by Boards of Guardians. From a business standpoint, I do not think it a good thing to have two authorities in the same area engaged in

the same relief work. The resolution adopted at last year's Conference, "That Boards of Guardians in administering the School Children's Relief Order should avail themselves of the co-operation and assistance of the local education authorities and their officers," seems to me to be the best way of dealing with this question. Co-operation between the Guardians and their officers, and the local education authorities and their officers, would enable each to do what they can do best, namely, the education authorities to bring to the notice of the Guardians those cases requiring assistance; and for the Guardians and their officers then to deal with them and provide assistance wherever necessary. The only objection I have heard to this is the question of disfranchisement. It cannot be too much insisted upon, I think, that disfranchisement is not imposed by Boards of Guardians upon anyone who receives relief from them. Disfranchisement is entirely imposed by Parliament, and Parliament can at any time, if it thinks fit, remove it. Whether the cost of the assistance is borne by the education authority, or by the Guardians, it is borne out of public money, and therefore the work should be done by the body having the machinery and officers ready at hand to do it, and who are trained to it. As bearing upon the question of relief and disfranchisement, I may mention that during the last session of Parliament (1905), the Unemployed Workmen Act was passed, and it enacts, amongst other things, "That the provision of temporary work or other assistance for any person under the Act shall *not* disentitle him to be registered or to vote as a Parliamentary, county, or parochial elector, or as a burgess." Without expressing any opinion as to the wisdom or unwisdom of this provision, it establishes my point that disfranchisement may be imposed, or may not be imposed, by Parliament, but Boards of Guardians do not impose it. (Hear, hear.) The Unemployed Workmen Act has not been in operation very long, so that one cannot speak of it with any degree of authority. As you all know, under the Act, Distress Committees have been constituted in all large towns, composed of members of the Town Councils, Boards of Guardians, and persons experienced in the administration of relief. One principle enunciated by the Local Government Board in their Circular-Letters and Orders dealing with the Act, namely, that of co-operation between the various authorities and their officers, is one I cordially approve of, and is, I think, one that should be more and more extended in future Acts of Parliament dealing with local administration. (Hear, hear.) The Government have promised to deal with the Unemployed Workmen Act during the present session of Parliament, and as we are to have a paper on the subject from Mr West, it is not necessary, nor desirable, that I should deal further with the subject at the present time, as I can speak on it during the course of the discussion on Mr West's paper. Since we last met, the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy has also presented its report, and as we are also to have a paper on the subject from Mr Adams, it is not at present

necessary for me to further refer to it. I am sorry to say, a matter I referred to last year, namely, the amount of the fee paid to Public Vaccinators, has not yet been altered by the President of the Local Government Board, although I have reason to think that before we meet again, the fee will have been reduced. (Applause.) But still, in spite of all that, I think we have every reason to feel aggrieved that that alteration has not been made before now. The Departmental Committee's Report was in possession of the Local Government Board in the early part of 1904, so that they have had practically two years in which to consider the matter, and as yet it is still under consideration. As I have already said, I have every reason to believe, from information I am in possession of, that before long we will have a report from the President of the Local Government Board upon that matter. (Hear, hear.) There is one other matter I intended to speak on before I sit down. That is to compliment one of our colleagues upon the high honour which has been placed upon him since our last meeting. Our friend Mr Craighill, Clerk to the Gateshead Board, has had the honour bestowed upon him of being made a county justice of the peace. (Applause.) I am inclined to think that that is an honour conferred not only upon an individual, but likewise upon the officers administering the Poor Law. (Hear, hear.) No doubt Mr Craighill's position as Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee of the Poor Law Unions Association of England and Wales has weighed very materially upon his being made justice of the peace. I am sure I am voicing your feelings when I wish him long life to enjoy that distinguished honour, and I am sure that we who know him best know that he will discharge that honour in as careful a manner as that in which he has discharged the duties of a Poor Law officer. (Applause.)

Rev. G. ALGERNON WEST then read the following paper:—

THE UNEMPLOYED WORKMEN ACT, 1905.

By REV. G. ALGERNON WEST.

Vice-Chairman, Sunderland Distress Committee.

RUSKIN told the men of his day, that they needed, not light, but sight, the power of seeing to see. To the credit of our day, it may be said that we are beginning to see with a wider, sharper, and clearer vision, and as must follow, what we see is leading us to action. To close our eyes to facts is no longer a virtue, to open them and keep them open is our imperative duty. For years there has existed in this country a large number of persons standing idle in the

market places, for no other reason than that no man hired them. For such, the enigma of life assumed the most bitter and perplexing form. All their talents and powers were in abeyance, and to the community of which they were members, they could contribute nothing, because the community gave them little or no opportunity. We are now beginning to see that the existence of the unemployed is a serious depreciation of national life; that the right to live involves the opportunity to work: that the problem of the unemployed and the problems which they create cannot in the interests of the commonwealth be ignored by our social workers, reformers, and statesmen.

The problem is practically a modern one, it is growing out of the new conditions under which our industrial system exists to-day. It is becoming more acute and serious, and it is making the social situation more complex. "The problem," Sir John Gorst says, "is one upon the solution of which the permanence of our existing social order depends." That is no exaggerated statement, the life of the whole social organism depends upon the nature and condition of its varying parts. If it is only on the low grounds of self-preservation, we cannot neglect this question. It is calculated that there must be at least three-quarters of a million of men and women out of work. This does not represent the total number affected through non-employment. The dependants of the unemployed must be reckoned, and that will mean multiplying the three-quarters of a million by three or four.

The Unemployed Workmen Act of 1905 is the national recognition of the problem of the unemployed. It is more, notwithstanding Mr Gerald Balfour's repudiation, it is an admission that the State has a duty to the unemployed; if the Act does not mean this it means nothing, and it is only trifling with the claims, needs, and hopes of the workless. At the risk of repeating what is familiar to all or most in this Con-

ference, may I briefly outline the purpose and provision of the Act?

The Purpose of the Act is, "To establish organisation with a view to the provision of employment or assistance for unemployed workmen in proper cases." Thus the Act aims: (1) to provide work, (2) to assist the unemployed.

The Provision of the Act.

1. The Act calls into existence a new authority known as a Distress Committee, to carry out the aims of the Act.

2. To ascertain who are the unemployed, and to bring employers in touch with them. It is the duty of this committee to establish, or where already existing, to take over, "labour exchanges and employment registers."

3. *The Distress Committee* may (a) provide or contribute towards the provision of temporary work out of the fund for voluntary contributions; (b) this work shall have for its object a purpose of actual and substantial utility; (c) the remuneration shall be less than that earned by an unskilled labourer under ordinary circumstances; (d) in no case shall the temporary work be continued beyond fifteen weeks without the consent of the Local Government Board.

4. *Farm Colonies* may be established with the consent of the Local Government Board, but all expense must be paid for by voluntary contributions.

5. The Committee may send a man (a) to another place within the area of England or Wales, on the assurance that there he will obtain regular work, or other means of supporting himself for twelve months; (b) under certain conditions an unemployed man and any of his dependants may be aided to emigrate.

The expenses connected with the administration of the Act are to be paid for by a contribution from the rates equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ d. in the £, or a higher rate, not ex-

ceeding 1d. in the £, if the Local Government Board approves.

Generally the provision of work, under the Act, depends upon voluntary contributions.

The Act originally disqualified any person who had been in receipt of outdoor relief for twelve months previous to his application. Now that gross injustice has been removed. Any person receiving benefit under the Act does not forfeit his rights as a citizen, and his name is not removed from the roll of the electors.

What has the Act done.—It is now quite clear that the Act is inadequate to deal with the problem which brought it into existence. But we must at the same time recognise what it has done. It is a mistake to refuse anything, because we cannot have everything.

We are thankful for the Act, as an instalment, and a recognition of the fact of the unemployed.

To the end of April 1906, 120,251 unemployed persons were registered under this Act; over 100,000 cases investigated, and 16,646 found not to be "proper cases."

To illustrate the working of the Act, I will take a concrete case, the work of the Committee with which I am familiar, the Sunderland Distress Committee. From 4th December 1905 to 25th June 1906, 1,286 unemployed persons were registered in Sunderland, 1,235 men and 51 women. The Labour Bureau was the means of obtaining work for 1,017 persons, 260 were engaged by private employers, 679 by the corporation, and 78 by the Distress Committee, by means of a grant from the Queen's Fund. Work was obtained by 261 persons through their own efforts. That the work secured was only of a temporary nature is evidenced by the fact that 510 persons re-registered. There are now 60 persons on the register who are unemployable, because they are suffering from old age, that is sixty. These figures are typical, and show to what extent the Act has helped the unemployed. The

Distress Committee, in the majority of cases, have been unable to provide direct work themselves. The Act offers no cure for unemployment, it offers only temporary work, and in many cases, it has been helpful to this extent.

The Act as an experiment has been educative, in what it has revealed, rather than remedial in what it has done.

It has revealed—1. The great value of trades unions in securing work and making provision in times when work is slack. Very few men made application to Distress Committees who were members of a trades union.

2. The helplessness of the unskilled workman, with all the pathos of uncertain and irregular work, has been made most apparent. The great majority of applications were from those belonging to this class. It is upon the unskilled workman, who receives very little sympathy or support from the skilled artisan, that the problem settles most heavily.

3. The working of the Act has shown that there is very little prospect of work for the man who reaches sixty years of age, unless he is a politician or a parson, and then he may become a cabinet minister or a bishop. The necessary age for an old-age pension is apparently sixty.

4. The Act has proved conclusively that there is a large class of unemployed persons who are out of work through causes beyond their control. The genuine unemployed exist, and exist in large numbers. It may, I think, be fairly claimed, that on the whole the Act has been worked with the purpose of obtaining the fullest results from it, but it has been found that it was not capable of yielding very much, or of helping the unemployed in any very adequate way.

The Act raised hopes in the minds of the workers that have not been fulfilled. There is nothing sadder than the daily visit to the Labour Bureau, with the

daily hope of obtaining a job, and the weary return to the fireless and often breadless home, to downcast wife and hungry children. Unless something is done soon the Act will even be of little use for registration purposes, for men will regard the making of an application as a farce and a delusion, if they have little or no probability of obtaining work in that way. Thirty-five Distress Committees have already closed their registers, chiefly because applications have ceased.

The Distress Committee, it must be remembered, have not by any means registered all the unemployed, and the returns they issue must not be regarded as complete. The great defect of the Act is, that the provision for work depends upon voluntary contributions. People will not pay rates, however small, and subscribe at the same time.

Emigration cannot be welcomed by any one who considers the future and the larger interests of the nation as a satisfactory means of dealing with this question. It is very like an attempt to shift our responsibility to the shoulders of some one else. Emigration may be a good thing for the emigrant, but a bad thing for the land he leaves. What then is needed to amend and improve the Act to make it more real and effectual? Here I cannot do better than quote the resolutions passed at a conference of representatives of Distress Committees, held in London last month. The resolutions are as follows :—

“ That although the Unemployed Workmen Act, 1905, has been useful in enabling the Distress Committees to obtain statistical information as to the number and classification of the unemployed, it has failed to adequately relieve the distress caused by the lack of employment throughout the country, and should not be renewed in its present form when its term expires.

“ That the unemployed problem is incapable of local solution, but must be dealt with on a national basis, and that although use may be made of local bodies

in administration, the inauguration and organisation of remedial measures in order to prove effective and economical must be by a national authority which is capable of acting on more comprehensive lines than those found practicable under the present Act.

“That while powers should be given to local authorities to levy a rate for administrative purposes, adequate funds, in excess of the present rate provided for under the present Act, should be provided from the national exchequer so that the burden of relief may be fairly distributed over the whole country.

“That the Government be asked to introduce and pass a Bill enabling an adequate grant to be made out of Imperial funds to Distress Committees.”

These resolutions were passed by a body of men of all shades of opinion, who had experience in working the Act.

The opinion is expressed that the Act has failed to adequately relieve the very class for which it was passed; that the unemployed question is too large a question, and too great a responsibility, to be dealt with by any local authority; that the problem being a National Problem, must be dealt with on a national basis; that whilst each locality must be made to feel some responsibility, by contributing something towards the cost, yet the main burden of expenditure should be borne by the national exchequer, and thus secure a more equal sharing of the responsibility by all places and all classes in the nation. To the State, the unemployed must look for the effectual dealing with their condition and claims.

To the nation, the workless man says, to quote the words of another, “I am one of the unemployed. I want work. I am willing to work. I am able to work. I cannot get work. I want work. I DEMAND work and wages.”

That demand some of us think is perfectly just.

No legislation for the unemployed can be satisfactory that does not deal with the unemployable. It is very easy to indulge in sweeping criticism of this unfortunate class, but we must remember that the unemployable were not always so, they have become so. The unemployable is a product of unemployment. Of course there are unemployable and unemployable.

In England there are 30,000 tramps, a terrible army, that pursues its dreary march with all the elements that are hostile to the well-being of society. This class must be dealt with vigorously and firmly for their own good as well as the good of the community.

The unemployable block the way and damage the cause and claim of the unemployed in the eyes of the public. There are at present 381,706 persons in receipt of Poor Law Relief. There can be no doubt but that a large proportion of this class might be more effectually dealt with than they are at present, and more satisfactory results obtained by a system of Compulsory Labour Colonies.

No remedy will be found until the cause of the disease is understood. There is real work for the student of social pathology to provide materials for the constructive work of statesmen.

We must remember that whatever solution we find for England must be English. We can find no exact parallel in any other country to our own history, tradition, social customs, and problems.

From other countries we may learn much, but it will be fatal to indulge in slavish imitation.

The existence of labour and penal colonies in Belgium, Holland, and Denmark, may show us what can be done, but we must make sure that what these countries with small populations have done, can be repeated in England.

No solution will be found without sacrifice. The nation must willingly submit to taxation for the benefit

of the workless. The taxpayer must curtail his luxuries if others are to have necessities.

All our efforts for some time to come can only be tentative and experimental. They can only be stages on the road to the final solution. The final solution cannot be reached until there is a reorganisation of our industrial system regulating supply and demand, and giving to the results of labour more just and equal distribution.

None of these schemes, such as farm colonies, afforestation, and the reclamation of the foreshore, can offer permanent solution to the unemployed problem. After the foreshore has been won from the encroaches of the sea, the workmen will sit down and sigh for other oceans to conquer.

Our present duty is to provide work, our next duty will be to remove the causes of unemployment. Something in this direction can be done when the twenty-five millions of acres of "England's green and pleasant" land now lying unused are brought as far as possible into use, and we place the "landless man upon the manless land."

Gathered here as administrators of the Poor Law, this subject has for us more than a passing interest. We must confess the failure of the Poor Law to deal satisfactorily with either the unemployed or unemployable. It is evident that the system with which we are connected cannot exist much longer without considerable change, amounting almost to a revolution in the whole Poor Law administration. There can be no regret if we are shorn of some of our powers, providing a better way is found for dealing with those who are in distress. Certainly the most honourable form of relief is work. Men want, not charity, but justice. The recognition of this principle must mark the advance of all social reform and legislation. Human life is the nation's best asset. Manhood is more than Mammon,

the people's welfare the true wealth. The coming days will make it more true that

"No man is born into the world whose work
Is not born with him. There is always work,
And tools to work withal, for those who will ;
And blessed are the horny hands of toil."

DISCUSSION.

Before asking the invited speaker to open the discussion,

The PRESIDENT said he was sorry he had omitted to mention one thing that had happened since the last Conference which he was sure they all regretted. That was the death of one of their oldest representatives and one of the most regular attendants at this Conference—the late Rev. Father Bourke. To many here Father Bourke was known very intimately and very personally, and a more charming old man or a more useful member of this Conference he did not think they ever had. When they met last year at Bowness, Father Bourke was lying just alive at Penrith. Since then he had passed away, and he was sure there were many there who would miss his face and his voice very much during this Conference. (Hear, hear.)

Mr C. T. STABLEFORTH (Chairman, Newcastle) then opened the discussion. He said there was very much in the paper with which he agreed and very little which, without some time for consideration, he could disagree with. They all must have felt who had had anything to do with carrying out the present Act how absolutely incapable it was in touching to any extent the solution of the unemployed difficulty. (Hear, hear.) He had the honour of being Chairman of the Newcastle Distress Committee, and many a time, not when in Committee, but when in the secretary's office trying to find work for those who made demands upon them, had he felt how futile were their efforts. In Newcastle from 10th November to 31st May they had had 4,086 applicants. These cases were thoroughly investigated, not only by the Investigation Committee, but by an investigation officer, and they had felt that whatever work they could provide was totally inadequate to deal with the number of genuine applicants they had. Of course they had some which were not genuine, and when investigated they found that some did not belong to Newcastle but came across the water from Gateshead. (Laughter.) Out of these 4,086 cases, 3,733 were males and 353 females. Of skilled men—bearing out what the reader of the paper said as far as trades unions were concerned—there were only 16 per cent., while of general labourers there were 69 per cent. That spoke volumes for the work trades unionism had done during the last twenty years to put the workmen of this country on a better footing than they had ever been before.

(Hear, hear.) They were able to approach the Corporation and get new works which employed 933 individuals—road-making, excavating, and that kind of work—and these worked 19,690 days, with an average of three weeks per man, and an average wage of 18s. per week of 39 hours. They paid in wages £2,953. To show that they did not get the value which the public could have got if the work had been done by contract, the actual cost of making one road was £1,875, whereas they could have got the same road made under contract for £1,359. Therefore they lost on that particular work—which they were enabled through the Queen's Fund to make up—the sum of £515 19s. 9d. Now, it might seem to some people that they did not know the class of men they had to employ when they lost £515 on such a small work. Their Investigation Committee had 4,000 people to select from. They really had 953 cases which proved satisfactory on investigation, cases which were absolutely genuine and had most individuals depending upon them. There were men who were practically physically unfit to do the work and yet had a large number of dependants, and these were taken in preference to abler men who had nobody dependent upon them. (Applause.) Had their Committee picked the men who were physically the most fit, he had no hesitation in saying that they could have finished the work for the sum estimated and made a profit on it. But instead of doing this, they chose men who, in some cases, were absolutely incapable of doing the work they were called upon to perform. Another danger in connection with relief work, which every one must have felt who had had anything to do with it, was that of malingering. When they had 1,000, 500, or 300 men working together, there were always some wasters amongst them, and if not under proper supervision these would do more harm to the morals of the other men than all other causes put together. Therefore this pointed to the absolute necessity of the various relief works being put under the strictest possible supervision. (Hear, hear.) The problem of unemployment, as mentioned by Mr West, was certainly not something which was temporary, and if it was not checked it would soon become a chronic thing; therefore any scheme calculated to deal with this question would have to be a national one, and would have to be of a permanent character. (Hear, hear.) What it was going to be he left to their statesmen, some of whom were no doubt having many weary hours at the present time in their endeavour to adopt some means to amend the miserable Act they had had to administer during the last six months. They had got over the difficulties of one winter, but the summer was very quickly going, and in a very short time they would probably have just as many men applying for work as they had last winter. Had it not been that Queen Alexandra had provided them with funds their Committees would have been absolutely helpless to deal with the problems placed before them by this Act. They could not hope for another fund to be provided. The Government must by some means make a grant

from the national exchequer. (Hear, hear.) When they got that grant the difficulty with the Relief Committees was what they were going to do with it to make some permanent provision to deal with these unemployed. To his mind the physical pain caused by unemployment was not the worst. Its most serious side was the rapid mental and moral deterioration and the growing danger threatening society by the sapping of all sense of manhood and all sense of responsibility. (Hear, hear.) He had the report presented by Mr Wood, the Secretary to the Newcastle Relief Committee, and he thought every member of the Conference should get a copy. No man had dealt with this question in a more reasonable, practical, and common-sense manner than Mr Wood had, and it would pay every member to get a copy of his report. In his paper Mr West told them that the Act provides the machinery for dealing with unemployment. So it did. In Newcastle they had spent £6,000, not for wages, but for administration, in providing officials and the works necessary for carrying out the Act. They could not spend one penny as far as wages were concerned. Unless there was some amendment in that respect it would be absolutely impossible for Newcastle, at anyrate, to do what it should do in finding work during the coming winter for the unemployed. (Hear, hear.) Mr West had pointed to a goal, but what that goal was going to be he did not tell them. There was a trend of the times, he had no doubt, which pointed very strongly to an alteration in the industrial concerns of this country. As to whether they would live to see it he very much questioned, but they would do all they possibly could in carrying out the Act of Parliament which, both as Guardians and members of Distress Committees, they had to perform, and if each acted according to their lights, and each separate Government of this country as it came into office was an advance on the last, no doubt the day was not far distant when they would be able to deal more effectively with the question than it had ever been dealt with in the past. (Hear, hear.) He trusted that the day was not far distant when every man in this country who was willing to work would be able to get work. If it was their honest opinion that a man was willing to work there should be no difficulty in providing him with work to which he had a right and a just claim. (Hear, hear.) He must apologise for not having been able to keep so closely to Mr West's paper as he would like to have done; but perhaps it was fortunate that he could not, for had he been able to do so he might have gone on speaking for an hour and have said nothing. (Laughter.) He was in the same difficulty that many others were in who had had to administer this Act; they were like the Israelites who had to make bricks without straw. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He felt in a very great difficulty in opening the discussion on this paper as he did not know what line it would take. He believed the paper was a solid and common-sense one, and although perhaps it had not been able to take them to the goal of a practical settlement,

he believed that out of a discussion of this kind some good would come, and that the unemployed question would be nearer solution than possibly it would if they left it unthinkingly and without discussion at all. (Applause.)

Canon WATERTON (Carlisle) said no doubt one of the ways of getting out of the difficulty was emigration. He was sorry to say, however, that his experience had been that the very best workmen, when they had the chance, took the opportunity of going either to the States or to Canada, and therefore the unemployed, who were practically worthless, thriftless drunkards, or that class which the last gentleman spoke about, those who were physically unfit—the lame and the maimed—remained at home, and their remaining at home would always make it a very great difficulty to get them employment which would be to the advantage of the community, and to the advantage of themselves. He felt sure that this would be an increasing difficulty, because the best men would leave the country, and those least able to work would remain, and how were these to be provided for. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. WOOD (Newcastle), on being called upon, said he had intended to hang fire a little longer because he found himself in such cordial agreement, not only with the reader of the paper, but with the tenour of the discussion. However, he felt that the subject was a most important one, and that it should not be allowed to lag for want of a speaker to step in the breach, therefore he spoke a little earlier than he intended to do. He had had considerable experience during the past winter in the administration of this Act, being Secretary of the Newcastle Distress Committee, and he felt, like the reader of the paper, how totally inadequate it was to a solution of the unemployed difficulty. He knew there could be no solution of that difficulty without a radical improvement in the present measure, which the Distress Committees were trying their best to administer, and the nation would have to consider very seriously whether it would not accept the responsibility which he thought was placed upon it of finding work for every man who was willing to work. They heard a good deal about the waster. They would deal with that waster when they had an opportunity of finding out who the waster was. They had not yet had that opportunity because they were in this position: If a man came before them or came to their homes and asked for charity they had no means of telling whether that man had any genuine desire for work or whether he had not. If there was a condition of society under which every man would be able to get work who desired work there would be no need for promiscuous charity, and no able-bodied person need be going about the roads or the streets seeking for crusts of bread or for coppers. (Hear, hear.) There was a phase of the subject which had perhaps been lost sight of, but which was undoubtedly a prolific cause of unemployment. This was, that while production had been going on and rapidly increasing, there had been no alteration in the hour limits during which the producer worked.

Whilst machinery had been increasing rapidly, there had been no corresponding reduction of hours during which men worked, consequently the increasing production must necessarily mean that men were thrust out upon the streets at an early age by those who were really producing too much. The poverty suffered to-day was not caused by under production; they were producing too much. (Hear, hear.) The mere fact that we had an unemployed problem proved that. There must be some attempt made to readjust the hours of labour before they could attempt a permanent solution of the evils of unemployment. (Hear, hear.) On going through the figures in his books for one month he found this, and it was rather a remarkable thing. Taking out the statistics of the ages of the different men who applied for relief during that month they found over 50 per cent. of them men between the ages of twenty and forty. In his young days this was regarded as an old man's problem more than a young man's problem, but to-day he found, whether they took this district or the South of England, or whether they took the results of the Distress Committee's work in bulk, the same result accrued—50 per cent. and over were men between twenty and forty years of age. The proportions were these: There were 673 men who were the subjects of this record, and of these there were under twenty, 14; between twenty and thirty, 104; thirty and forty, 250; forty and sixty, 261; sixty and over, 44. His Chairman had referred to the results of making a particular road, and these figures explained the reasons why it was not a commercial success. When they considered that they were dealing with a class of men many of whom were physically incapable of doing a fair day's work for a fair day's wage—and that was what they tried to provide in Newcastle; they provided a wage of a little over 5½d. an hour, which was a fairly decent wage for labouring men doing excavating work—well, they did their best, but they found a great number who were physically incapable of undertaking the rather unusual and in some cases difficult work they were put to. He had one man working for him who was eighty-seven years of age and who worked all the time during alternate weeks throughout the winter. (Mr Stableforth: Shame.) He agreed with his Chairman that it was a shame that men of that age should be compelled to accept work of this nature. As a matter of fact, from the point of view of doing his best that man was a standing example to all the men employed. (Hear, hear, and applause.) They had a duty to these old men, and they had a duty to the physically incapable. For instance, he had one man who was both deaf and dumb, otherwise physically fit, and evidently capable of doing a hard day's work when he had the opportunity. That man was the support of a widowed mother who was blind. There was a combination of unfortunate circumstances and surroundings for a young man on the threshold of life, who had absolutely no prospect of being able to support himself except by work of this nature. They could not expect an employer to undertake the responsibility

of employing a man who could not understand the instructions given him. They could imagine the difficulty he had with a man who could neither write, read, nor hear. There had been some remarks made regarding emigration. He thought emigration, from the point of view of the men who applied to Distress Committees, was not a popular method of dealing with the unemployed. The Board of Trade sent down to him 222 papers, and asked him to take this number of men as they came to the Bureau, and ask them a certain number of questions, which he did. One of the questions was: "Are you willing to be emigrated out of the country?" Of the 222 men only 19 desired to be emigrated, and of these 11 were married men with an aggregate of 17 children, and 8 were single. He agreed with his friend who had just spoken that emigration was not, and never could be, a solution, because they emigrated the best blood and the best intelligence, while they retained the least desirable and the least able to contend with the conditions with which they were surrounded. (Hear, hear.) Even if emigration were the ideal way of settling men on the land, they had, as the reader of the paper had shown, any amount of land in our own country which might be used for this purpose. (Hear, hear, and applause). While they would agree that the results were somewhat disappointing, he believed that the Distress Committees throughout the country had performed a very useful service to the community, from the fact that they had carefully considered the question, and there had been various schemes for dealing locally with different phases of the subject, which would be of inestimable benefit to the Government in the construction of a Bill. He hoped they would not bring in an ill-advised scheme and rush it through in the manner in which the last was rushed through, without thought and without consideration. They had better wait another year and have a thoroughly thought-out scheme, than have a Bill which would be just a temporary expedient. They should have some grant from the national exchequer which would enable them to perform their duty to a deserving section of the community during the winter months, and next year have a better Bill. (Hear, hear.) Another phase of the question had not received the attention it should have—that was the unemployment which exists among women. These women, many of them, were the support, and the only support, of large families. They had been deprived of the bread-winner by accident or other cause, and they were struggling—he was going to say manfully—but they were struggling womanfully to bring their children up in the way in which they should be brought up, experiencing very great misery and destitution from the fact that employment was not prolific for women. In the 1901 census over 4,000,000 women were returned as engaged in wage-earning employment. Of these 917,000 were married or widows, and it was presumed that a very large proportion of these had families to support. The duty of the State, he thought, was to provide some class of

labour for this sex. (Hear, hear.) There were only two avenues of employment for women which were not already overstocked, namely, farm service and ordinary household service; and he thought, when dealing with the question of land colonies, there should be land colonies upon which those physically fit and desirous might be put to learn the lighter duties of the farm, such as chicken rearing and dairy work, so that they might be able to undertake work more genial than that to be found in the town. At the same time, these colonies might be made the means of training in domestic service also. (Hear, hear.) They all knew that persons who employed domestic servants were delighted to get servants who had received their training in the country, these being cleaner and more reliable in every way. (Hear, hear.) From the experience he had had in the working of the Unemployed Act he thought they must abolish entirely the idea of charitable relief in connection with work. They might say it was charitable, or they might call it what they liked, but so long as the idea of charity entered into the distribution of work, they would have the malingerer who came and spoiled the chances of the man really desirous to work, and although they might do much by additional supervision over the work they performed, still it would not be satisfactory until they could go to the men and say, "Now, look here, this work is not charitable work at all; this work is a contract which we have undertaken to perform, and you must, according to your capacity and ability, do a fair day's work for a fair day's wage." In dealing with the malingerer he would put the Biblical axiom into operation and say, "If you will not work you will have to starve." (Hear, hear, and laughter.) The Act of last year saved Poor Law funds in a great measure. Homes were saved which would otherwise have been broken up, healthy and useful work was provided, and if it was extended to include all who desired to work it would prevent that mental, moral, and physical deterioration which his Chairman had spoken of from going on and getting worse. (Applause.)

Mr S. ADAMS (Auckland) said they were all thankful to Mr West for the manner in which he had put before them the goal which they desired to reach. He was a little disappointed, however, in not having in fuller detail suggestions as to the steps to be taken to reach that goal. He unfortunately had no suggestions to make. What he considered to be a manifest defect of the Act was that it only applied to large urban areas, while it should really apply to the country at large, and be administered by bodies having jurisdiction over the country. (Hear, hear.) The effect of it was to drive from the rural districts into towns large numbers of unemployed. There was provision in the Act that it might be put into operation in rural districts by special application to the Local Government Board, but he could not imagine any Board of Guardians, especially one on the boundary of a large urban area, applying for powers to provide for the unemployed, when these could just go across the border and be in an urban

area. Therefore there should be some provision by which the Act should be administered over the whole country. (Applause.)

Rev. Canon WALKER (Castleward) said he would like to ask Mr Wood where the deaf and dumb case he mentioned belonged to, because he thought there were about 800 deaf and dumb people in the counties of Northumberland and Durham, and if only one applied for work it at least showed that at least 799 of them were able to find employment. He believed that a very large number of deaf and dumb people were employed in the manufacturing works on the banks of the Tyne, and if this man was unable to read or write there must have been neglect somewhere, because there were deaf and dumb institutions and many agencies for teaching them to read and write and also to help them to get employment. It was very satisfactory to think that only one deaf and dumb person applied for work to the Relief Committee. He would like also to ask the reader of the paper and others who were so very fond of speaking of the manless land and the landless man, what were they going to do with all the thousands of acres they spoke of? and whether they had considered this, that the present owners of land were just as anxious to make money as any of them, and if they could let that land or it could be worked better than at present, he thought they would do so. But this land was not productive; there were no tenants who would take it even if it were offered under almost any conditions. He could point out acres and acres of land where he would not like to send a man to cultivate it, even if he might have it rent-free and have all the produce he raised from it. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) When they spoke of land being unoccupied it would be well if means were taken to find out how much land could be profitably occupied; how much is not as profitably employed as it could be. He thought they would find, for the most part, that land which could be cultivated was being cultivated, and cultivated under as economical conditions as possible, and that the men who were cultivating it were anxious to get the best results from it they possibly could. He wanted also to refer to women out of work. He gathered from Mr Wood's statistics that the proportion of women was small in comparison to the men seeking employment. One thing that had struck him lately in the course of his duty as Guardian was the number of women who had been deserted by their husbands and left in charge of large families who were struggling and doing what they could to maintain these families. These came to them, and they could not let them starve; but he did think it required an amendment of the law which would make it possible to find these men and compel them to do their duty in maintaining their families. (Hear, hear.) He took it that a very large proportion of the women employed in labour were employed in the textile industries. In Lancashire and the West Riding of Yorkshire there were numbers of married women working in the mills to contribute to the maintenance of the household. Occasionally in times of depression these must be thrown out of work. Therefore

some means should be taken to find them work. His experience was that farmers at the present time had very great difficulty, indeed, in getting women to go out in farm service in the country. Those of them who lived in the country experienced very great difficulty in getting domestic servants, who had a great desire to go into the towns. Whether it was that they got more wages or more liberty, whether it was that the life of pleasure invited them, as it was inviting a very large number of the population at present, one could not tell. He was afraid that farm colonies would do very little towards teaching these domestic service or teaching them proper farm service, which he took it could only be learned upon a farm which was worked upon profitable and economical conditions. (Hear, hear.)

Mr GEO. SMITH (Gateshead) expressed himself delighted with the paper. He was delighted with what it contained, but he was much more delighted because of much that had been left out of the paper. (Laughter.) He had been accustomed to read papers written by professional, clerical, and lay people, and he had invariably discovered that the one leading note in most of the essays had been that of the shiftlessness and thriftlessness on the part of most of the unemployed people. He was pleased because Mr West had not dealt at any length upon that phase of the subject. (Hear, hear.) He had heard much about the great moving mass of people who were denominated as thriftless, and shiftless, and unworthy of the serious notice of philanthropic people and those who were desirous of providing work for men willing to work. They had approaching a million of people of both sexes out of work. Had it ever occurred to the mind of men who had been talking very much on this subject as to the percentage of men and women who absolutely and positively declined to work? He came from a salubrious part. (Laughter.) They had the unemployed there, and he had taken some little trouble in order to try and discover the number of men and women who had made up their minds not to work but to live on the industry and thrift of those who were employed. He had interviewed about a hundred, and he had found that there were not more than 5 per cent. of the Felling people whom he was prepared to describe as wastrels—men who absolutely on principle had made up their minds not to work. If they had only five people in every hundred at Felling who had made up their minds not to work, was it an impossible thing for the other ninety-five to tackle them and deal with them? (Laughter.) He admitted that there are thriftless and shiftless people, but at the same time he was prepared to maintain that these were an effect to a very large degree, and not so much a cause as was sometimes imagined. (Hear, hear.) How did they get these? Go into any large industrial centre and they would find that the thriftless and shiftless were propagating their species. How were they to tackle this question? There was a means, he believed. If they wisely and sincerely faced the question they would be able to discover that when a man who had been in work found himself out of work, and his little savings dwindling, the first

thing he did was to seek a cheaper house in a locality which was less salubrious and less conducive to the development of moral character than was the district in which he had lived. He took his children there, and these would run with children who were coarser in habits; and gradually that man, from a respectable working-man living in a working-class neighbourhood, sank lower and lower, until the very environment which by force of circumstances he had been placed in began to sap his moral character, and they found him in the course of twelve or eighteen months an unemployable person, whom no respectable employer would be prepared to listen to when he came along asking for work. (Hear, hear.) In discussing the Unemployed Act placed on the statute book by the last Government he would very much have liked if the reverend gentleman who read the paper had given them a list of the questions which were to be put to every applicant for employment. There was a list of some thirty or thirty-five questions which he was sure very few self-respecting men would be prepared to answer. Some of them were most preposterous, and when he read them he was simply convulsed with laughter. (Laughter.) Such questions as these: "Where do you live? How long have you been there? Where were you born? Who is your grandfather?" (Much laughter, and a remark from the President that he did not think there was such a question as that.) The speaker was handed a list of the questions, some of which he quoted, and continuing, said the average out-of-work man knew very little about them, and he fancied that if members of the Distress Committees had to answer some of them they would find themselves in somewhat of a dilemma. (Laughter.) At least one of the speakers had referred to the subject of drunkenness. They all deplored drunken habits, not only in working men, but in men who were not working, or whoever they happened to be. Men did drink. ("Shame," and laughter.) It might be a shame; perhaps it was a great pity. But how many of them drank? He took a walk down Gateshead and tried to count the number of "drunks" in the High Street from a quarter to eleven till half-past eleven. He counted forty-three men and women who were drunk—visibly affected by drink. But how many people did he pass who were sober? He should say over 2,000. If they had forty-five or fifty-five people who were spending more of their wages than they could afford on drink, certainly they ought to be thankful for the 2,000 people who did not drink, and those 2,000 people who did not drink should be able to manage forty or fifty who were drinking. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Regarding the land question, no doubt there were large tracts of land which were practically worthless, but at the same time most of them could discover hundreds, nay thousands of acres in this country, and in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland also, which had simply been allowed to run to waste, and on which they could grow cabbages and potatoes in very respectable crops, because in the past crops had been produced there—crops which had sustained the residents of the district. (Hear, hear.) As to farm colonies,

when these began to produce vegetables and things and sent them to an already congested market, they would be competing against people who were probably providing the rates to finance the farm colonies, and what was going to be the effect? He believed there was more in the subject of afforestation than they had been inclined to accept. (Hear, hear.) What about our great imports of foreign timber? In twenty years, hundreds of thousands of acres of land in this country and Scotland could be utilised for that purpose, and they would then be beginning to build up a useful industry which would tend to develop the physical and moral health of the people—people of whom this country would be proud. He fancied that the time had come when they should give more attention to this subject than they had done hitherto. (Applause.)

Mr G. OLIVER (Tynemouth), referring to the reclamation of the land for the people, mentioned, as an instance of the benefits which might accrue from the adoption of this course, his own native village in Northumberland, where in his father's time there were 1,100 acres of common land belonging to the villagers. There were twenty-eight houses and about one hundred and forty inhabitants. Each householder had a cow and a small holding where he could grow vegetables in addition to following his daily employment. When it was suggested that it was time these large commons were enclosed there was notice sent round that this common was going to be enclosed. He had lived to see the effects of that. The common was enclosed, the people were restricted and had to dispense with their cows and small holdings, and the land was put into the hands of four tenants. Whereas there were twenty-eight houses at that time, there were now only nine householders. The effect was to turn them out—himself amongst them—and they had to go into the industrial parts. He had lived to see the unemployed amongst them, and here were they to-day come from these crowded and congested districts to bewail this lack of work. (Hear, hear.) If they could do so by any force or persuasion they should get the Government to appoint a Committee to get the land restored to the people. (Hear, hear.) The people would then go back to the land, and possibly he and a good many others would not be there. (Hear, hear.)

Mr GEO. CRAIGHILL (Gateshead) said those on the Distress Committees, and especially those in official positions, had had a very anxious time during the past winter. They had people applying and they did not know what to do to help them in the best way. The thing was so complex that he thought they would agree that no one remedy would meet the difficulty. (Hear, hear.) He agreed very largely with what the Chairman said as to the advantage of co-operation between different local authorities in dealing with this question. By this they would keep down expense and get good feeling amongst the authorities instead of having that sort of feeling that one authority should manage everything. He did not believe in that, and he did not believe it was in the public interests. (Hear, hear.)

He did not think they would get a remedy for the unemployed question this year or for a good many years to come. All the same, they would go on trying and learning by experience. (Hear, hear.) They must have patience and do the best they could and give other people credit for doing their best and for the same good intentions as they had themselves. (Applause.)

Mr WOOD, replying to the question asked by the Secretary, said he would give Canon Walker the name of the deaf and dumb case referred to. He did not know that this young man was always deaf; one affliction came on as the result of the other. They investigated the case and found it absolutely genuine.

Mr D. LANG (Bootle) thought that the back-to-the-land proposal was the most practical solution of the difficulty that had been brought before them that morning. The last election was a democratic election throughout, and the result was a great and overwhelming majority of one party. They always looked upon that party as a progressive party. (Hear, hear.) Those who read history would remember that in the past 6,000,000 acres of land belonged to the people of this country; but it didn't now. A good many of those who held land now got it in not very honourable ways. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) When he saw all these unemployed landless men he thought that if these had been treated properly and the landowners had not got hold of the land there would not be the poverty which they had to-day. The wealth was being produced by the sinew and sweat of the workers, and some one else got the benefit, and the result was that these workers had been asking for relief during the past winter. They might talk about farm colonies as they liked, but he thought that those who did Poor Law work should go to the very root of the evil and tackle the land question. (Hear, hear.) They should impress upon this and future governments to give the land back to the people. (Hear, hear, and laughter.)

Mr H. JENNER-FUST (Local Government Board Inspector), on being invited to speak, said he was afraid that he could not add much, if anything, to the discussion. In that portion of his district which belonged to the district of the Northern Conference, there had been, so far as he was aware, no great action taken under this Unemployed Workmen's Act, but in Lancashire there had been. In Lancashire there were fifteen county boroughs in which Distress Committees had been established. There were also three urban authorities to whom special orders had been issued. The proceedings of these various authorities had been very much on familiar lines. They had established registries and sought to bring employer and workmen together with varying measures of success. They had also set on foot, with the aid of corporations, various works on which the unemployed had been put to work. The wages, as a rule, had been provided out of the Queen's Fund; there had not been many instances in which subscriptions had been asked for, though there had been a few. He thought that in the majority of

instances, when the Queen's Fund was exhausted, the work came to an end. He remembered an instance where a few men were being employed and paid out of the Queen's Fund, the suggestion was made that more men should be put upon the work so as to exhaust the fund sooner, and enable a further application to be made for another contribution from the fund. (Laughter.) In Manchester, Liverpool, Bolton, and elsewhere, a very great amount of labour and pains had been spent upon the administration of this Act and the Orders, but he was obliged to think, when they looked at the ultimate result, that they must confess that these measures were simply palliatives which enabled the present time to be tided over, and that when next winter came they would find themselves face to face with a very similar condition of things as obtained a year ago, and that they would also have to face the fact that, owing to the large amount of work taken in hand before it would, under natural circumstances, have been taken in hand, there would be less work available upon which these men could be employed. The Manchester Distress Committee put some men to work on Chat Moss, and the results, to a certain extent, were satisfactory, a very large proportion—almost all—of the men taking to the work, and sticking to it fairly well. The action of the Distress Committees in Liverpool and Manchester had come to an end for the summer months, and when winter came upon them again the same round would have to be gone through unless some genius in the Government discovered a way out of the difficulty. He understood that the President of the Local Government Board was to make a statement in the House that night on the subject of the unemployed, and they all hoped that he would be able to say something which would, at all events, make a beginning towards a more permanent solution of the difficulties than had yet been afforded. (Applause.)

Rev. A. F. CURWEN (Whitehaven) said he thought there must always be a danger in what he might call artificial work increasing the very evil it sought to remedy. For instance, they were told about road-making which, when finished, had lost something like £500. The questions arose, had somebody not suffered through that work being given to the unemployed? whether there was not a number of men who would have been employed by the contractor who would have received considerable wages for making that road? whether they were not partly thrown out of work in order to be able to create work artificially to give it to other people? This was a danger they would always have before them—whether by finding employment in work which was not really wanted, they economically were not really increasing the number of unemployed. (Hear, hear.) One came to the conclusion that it would be better to find out the root of all this unemployment. Was it not from one or two causes which he would touch upon? One had been touched upon already; that was the question of drinking habits of the people. Drinking habits could be found just as much in the higher ranks of society as in the lower,

but in the higher ranks these did not produce unemployment, while in the lower ranks they did. (Hear, hear.) Therefore the drunken habits of a working man might throw a whole family on the rates. If they could take by any means whatever the enormous number of public houses from the publicans and throw the publicans into the list of unemployed, that, he thought, would do a great deal to hinder this enormous amount of unemployment. (Laughter.) The subject of emigration was one which he had considered a good deal. It was his lot to live in a part of the country from which a great many of the mining population had emigrated—on the west coast of Cumberland. These had gone chiefly to the United States, and a great many of them were in South Africa. He came across some of these men by correspondence, and when they returned to this country to take a holiday. In the conversation he had had with them he learned this, that they were utterly surprised that so many men would continue in employment in West Cumberland at the wages which they were getting when every one of them had the chance of emigrating to South Africa and becoming independent men in a very short time if they were steady, sober men. He himself had been an emigrant; he had lived some years in Australia, and he knew the different positions men occupied there, if they were sober and steady men, to those they could possibly occupy in this country. He knew one man of his own parish who wrote home, who, when he was in Harrington, was driving probably a farm cart, but was now riding a horse, and getting probably something like £250 a year as a boundary rider. He thought emigration was the great panacea for unemployment. But emigration should not be of their best men; it should be systematic emigration assisted by the Government, which would remove whole communities and settle them in different parts of the Continent, America, Australia, New Zealand, and other places, so that the men and women who went out would find continuity of their life and not be segregated and lost in the great ocean beyond. (Hear, hear.) This was a work which was being done partly by General Booth; and he thought every one recognised the wonderful work which that old man had done. (Hear, hear.) General Booth had obtained a grant from the Canadian Government, and his intention was to emigrate whole communities of people; and they may also have seen that he was prepared to emigrate 10,000 aliens from England to the Argentine Republic if funds are forthcoming. That was the only way in which the congested labour market could be brought down to its proper level, so that each man might be able to earn a fit and proper wage for himself and family. (Hear, hear.) Regarding the deaf and dumb man who had been mentioned, it was his (the speaker's) lot some three years ago to build a new rectory. The two chief masons who did the beautiful stonework and carving were men from Carlisle or the neighbourhood who were deaf and dumb—two brothers. It was wonderful the work these men did seeing that they were so handicapped in their start in life. They were well-paid men in a thoroughly

comfortable position. One or two men he knew were continually coming to him because they were unemployed, and they were unemployed because they were men of continual drunken habits. There, he fancied, they would find one of the greatest troubles. He thought the solution was organised emigration, people being sent out in communities, sent out in such a way that they would not be common labourers when they got there, but would be able to invest some money in land and houses for themselves and their families. (Applause.)

Mr J. SOULSBY (Tynemouth) regarded this as one of the most critical problems he knew of, but it was no good talking about the difficulty of the problem. His line of thought was how to some extent to cure the disease. He could not say that he was a great believer in the emigration of the people from this country. There was plenty in it to keep them all. Regarding the conditions under which emigration was conducted he understood that they had to undergo a medical examination before being taken on board an emigrant ship which would take them from the land in which they were born to a strange land which they knew little or nothing about. He hoped that as long as he lived he would be able to stop in the land of his birth. (Hear, hear.) If during the medical inspection they were found not to be most physically strong people they would not be accepted as emigrants. What did that mean to those at home? It meant that they were going to emigrate the best men and women of their own nation for the benefit of a nation which was going to be a detriment to their own. (Hear, hear.) If they sent away the best men they had it implied that the most inferior class would be left behind. That, to his mind, was no answer to the question of the unemployed, as it had a tendency to increase their number. (Hear, hear.) Another idea he had gleaned—and he was proud to hear it—was that of self-help. He was a sort of self-help man. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He had never made a practice since he came into the world of asking anybody to do for him what he was able to do for himself. (Hear, hear.) He knew the Committees were doing their best in looking after the unemployed, and he was proud that there were men interested in such important work, but he would be more proud still if it were not wanted. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) One remark he heard the gentleman from Newcastle make was that of the big number who had made application for relief there were 16 per cent. who were union men, that was men who were making provision for themselves. When he heard that figure he was proud that he was a union man. (Hear, hear.) On the other hand, the same gentleman remarked that the number of applicants who were non-organised men—men who did not seem to take much interest in making provision for themselves—was 69 per cent. Here they had a great margin. Each and every one who were thoughtful men strove with all the health and vigour God gave them to become as they should be for the welfare of the nation.

Let them strive to help themselves, and by helping themselves they would be placed in a position to help other people. (Hear, hear.) As regards drunkenness, did they find a big number of unemployed amongst sober people? Certainly not. The speaker quoted a case showing that drink not only destroyed a man's physical constitution, but was also the means of placing him amongst the unemployed. Thousands of brothers and sisters were going upon these lines, bringing themselves to positions amongst the unemployed simply because they had deteriorated their physical constitutions by drink. He hoped every one there would think about that and strive by all the power God had given them to keep themselves out of the evil which they saw around them. (Hear, hear.)

Mr Jos. BATEY (South Shields) complimented the reader upon his very able paper. The discussion had been very interesting. There had been a chorus of approval that the present Unemployed Act had been a complete failure. What struck him more especially was that all the speakers seemed to desire that we should have a better Act. They hoped it would not be long before such was introduced into the House of Commons, and some of them would watch very patiently and very anxiously for the statement which they were told the President of the Local Government Board was to make in the House of Commons to-night. (Hear, hear.) He did not think he would have troubled to have entered into the debate had it not been for the remarks made by the two last speakers especially. The last speaker but one told them the cause of unemployment was drunkenness. He stood as a lifelong abstainer, and he also stood there as one having a large experience of trade union organisation. His experience had taught him that amongst their unemployed there were a large number of men whom it could not be laid to their charge that they were addicted to drink. (Applause.) A young man who lived not many doors from him, married, with children, was out of work for a long time. Some one said to him, "If you go to Washington to-morrow you will find a man there who will probably find you work." Next morning that young man got up and tramped to Washington from Shields. When he got there he was unable to find the man he expected to find, and he turned round and walked back again. What was worse, during all the time he had been tramping from Shields to Washington, and from Washington to Shields, he never broke his fast. Worse than that, his wife and three bairns had not broken their fast. Yet that young man to his (the speaker's) knowledge was a total abstainer. (Applause.) Another case came into his mind. A man who had followed the sea for years fell out of a berth. He tramped from shipyard to shipyard and always received one reply, "I cannot give you work." One day while he was out tramping his wife went to the relieving officer and told him her story. The relieving officer said, "I am sorry for you, but you are able-bodied people; you haven't any family, and I cannot give you any relief. All I can do is to give you an order for the

Workhouse." The woman went home, and when her husband came in she told him where she had been and what had ensued. The poor fellow leaned against the side of the bed, and then dropped on to the floor dead. At the coroner's inquest the doctor had to admit that the man had died of starvation. That man was a temperance man. He submitted that when a man told them that the cause of unemployment was intemperance they could only come to the conclusion that he had not had experience amongst large bodies of men or he would not make a statement to that effect. (Hear, hear.) To his mind the cause of unemployment was the natural result of the present organisation of industry. With the way industry was organised at the present time there could not be any other result than that which they got at the present time. (Hear, hear.) Take the coal-mining industry. Why was a pit sunk? It was sunk because a few men had capital to spare, and they believed that in the pit they would find a good investment. They employed workmen, not for the sake of the workmen, not for the sake of the community; they only employed them so long as it paid them to do so. As soon as that coal mine ceased to pay they dismissed the workmen, who had either to tramp the streets or end their days in the Workhouse. What was their experience in Durham county? He was speaking as a member of the Durham Miners' Union with a large experience of the working of that Union. They found that all over that very large county, wherever it was possible to substitute machines for men, they were doing it. Almost every week machines were introduced into the coal mines to save labour. Men told him there must be labour-saving machinery. That may be, but the introduction of machinery was to make as much dividend as possible, and he submitted that the only result was the throwing out of work of hundreds and thousands of working men. For this they had only one remedy to advance—the best remedy for unemployment was to get men back to the land. (Hear, hear.) In reply to the Canon, who said, What was the use of sending men on to the land unless the land was worked at a profit?—if the land was worked by private enterprise, then he submitted that private enterprise should have the profit; but he took it that the speaker's object in reading the paper was to suggest that they should get men back to the land not merely to get profit from the working of the land, but more with the object of getting men employed on the land. If the land was nationalised, as some one else had suggested, he submitted that they should not have so much for their object the making of profit on the land, but their object should be to employ working men on the land, and this might pay public authorities even if it did not produce a profit, because it might be cheaper to employ men on the land than to have to give them relief, as they had to do through the Relief Committees. (Hear, hear.) Personally, he did not believe that there was any prospect of finding a remedy for unemployment through relief works, because there was a danger that whilst they were employing unemployed men they were throwing other men out

of work who would have been engaged by contractors. One scarcely knew whether they would have a satisfactory solution even in farm colonies, but one did believe that to solve the problem of unemployment the best remedy they could have was to get to the root of the cause, and to prevent industry being organised as it is for private profit. (Applause.)

Mr JOHN DAVIDSON (Newcastle) thanked the reader very much for his paper. He thought Mr West had dealt with the matter in a very fair and able way. The Unemployed Act came in for quite a schooling. Personally he was very thankful for its introduction. He did not know what many large communities would have done had not that Act been in operation. (Hear, hear.) No Bill that ever came forward in Parliament was a complete Bill. They had tried the Act in different places, and they saw what its shortcomings were, and he had no doubt that the present Government also saw, and that when they did give them another Bill, it would be a much better one, and the experience they had gained from this imperfect Bill would be the better for them. (Applause.) He believed there was no Distress Committee which had done more or better work than the Newcastle Distress Committee had done. (Hear, hear.) They had tackled the question in a manly spirit, and, as they had heard, there had been a thousand people relieved by that means. There had been a great deal said about drunken and thriftless people. What was their position? They could only tell them what they knew and had proved. He believed a lot of subscriptions were withheld from the Queen's Fund because that was the general opinion of the people throughout the country, that these unemployed were unworthy of the people. What was the result? Speaking as Chairman of the Investigation Committee, they went into the cases thoroughly, and investigated every case they dealt with. Eighty or eighty-five per cent. were most deserving cases. (Hear, hear.) These were not only dealt with by the Committee, but they had an investigator who went to the homes of the people and verified the investigations, and the men they did employ were certainly deserving people. If he could read the letters they had had from these people saying how thankful they were for the work given them, these would show that the Unemployment Act came as a great boon. (Hear, hear.) They must take people as they are. He was not going to say but that there were very many perhaps who were unemployed through their own fault, but they could not allow any man, in a land where they were held up as Christians, to starve, and if there were people who desired work, then it was their duty as public men to endeavour to find them work. (Hear, hear.) There were some of the cleverest men amongst those who had lost their work through drink. He believed the remedy, to a very large extent, was "back to the land." (Hear, hear.) It was said many years ago—and although it was held up to ridicule there was more in it than perhaps many thought—that every man should have three

acres and a cow. (Laughter.) He believed if we had as good a land law for England as they had for Ireland, things would be much better. (Hear, hear.) What had made the United States the great country it is to-day? It had been so made by the people reclaiming the land. He did not see why in England or in any other place one man should possess thousands upon thousands of acres of land while people in large centres were almost starving. They not only possessed large quantities of land, but some of these gentlemen said people must not fish in the sea unless they went out three miles from the land. (Laughter.) That was not the state of things which should be. The land belonged to the people—(hear, hear)—and the sea belonged to the people, and the sooner we got the people back to the land he thought that would help them more than anything. (Applause.) They were all anxiously awaiting the reply the President of the Local Government Board would give to this question. He trusted it would be suggested that they have a large slice from the exchequer to tide them over next winter, because next winter, he believed, would be as bad as the one just passed. Now that the Government had seen the experience of this unfortunate Unemployed Act, perhaps they would get something better. (Applause.)

Mr J. M. NICHOLSON (Sunderland) said he was very much interested in the paper and the discussion, though he had not been altogether satisfied with the lines which the discussion had taken. Various remedies had been pointed out, and some speakers seemed to have an idea that one remedy would meet all cases. The problem had many aspects, and different cases would have to be dealt with on different lines. He was sorry, in one way, that emigration had been somewhat discounted. Several speakers had spoken rather disapprovingly of emigration. He thought it was one of the remedies for this undesirable state of things. (Hear, hear.) He remembered in the early fifties when emigration set in to Australia and New Zealand what a lot of work it opened up. Men who were not employed found employment, and encouragement was given to emigration and it improved things at home. He had thought what a grand opportunity had been missed. He did not know who was responsible, possibly the Government, but he thought that emigration might have been turned to practical account for the benefit of the nation just after the South African War. During the war he often heard people deploring what would be the state of things when the war was finished, and he ventured to express the opinion that this would not be such a serious matter for the country because South Africa would be opened up to emigration. He naturally thought the Government would offer facilities to people South Africa with English people. (A voice : "Chinese," and laughter.) He was not going to trespass on political lines. (Hear, hear.) No attempt had, however, been made in that direction. Many thousands of unemployed who might have found profitable employment in South Africa were here to-day unemployed, and the industrial part of the

community who were employed were doing their best by private means to keep them. (Hear, hear.) The soldiers sent out to Africa—a good many of them were perhaps not the best or most desirable, but he thought that they should have been kept and provided for and found work in Africa, and they could have been if proper means had been used. The drink question had been touched upon as a cause. He was not going to minimise the effects of drink—he was a teetotaler, but there were other causes which contributed to this state of things. The improvident habits of the people, for instance. So long as ever people continued in their present habits of living they could not expect to have a better state of things. So many of them, not by compulsion, not by stress of circumstances, had simply fallen into a loose way of living—living continually from hand to mouth. They had no idea of providing for a rainy day. They wanted schoolmasters to educate these people in this more than had been done, and he believed that then it would very soon change the aspect of society and that they would be able to find work to do for those willing to work. (Applause.)

Mr W. IRELAND (Whitehaven) said he rose with some diffidence because he was only a young man in Poor Law work. He was very much impressed by the able paper that had been read and by the discussion. One thing which impressed him very much was the result of an investigation which one gentleman had given and which had dispelled a delusion under which he had been labouring. He had always thought that the problem of the unemployed was an old man's problem, and he was surprised to learn that such a large number of unemployed were men between the ages of twenty and forty. That, he thought, was one of the most serious aspects of the problem. (Hear, hear.) They all knew that under present conditions employers could not be expected to be willing to employ men who had arrived at an age when they were perhaps less active, less able to work, and more liable to accident. They were all equally satisfied that no employer would employ a man who was guilty of intemperance, because that man was not only a source of trouble through loss of time, but he was less physically fit than the man of sober and temperate habits. (Hear, hear.) He had never held that drunkenness and improvidence were the principal causes of unemployment. Most of them would agree that drunkenness existed to a deplorable extent and that it would be better if people were more sober; but that the intemperate habits of the people were responsible for unemployment was only true in a very slight degree. (Hear, hear.) The evil arose, he fancied, from the fact, as indicated by previous speakers, that the people had been seduced from the land to which they formerly had a right and which formerly belonged to them. He believed the solution would ultimately be found to lie along the lines of restoring the land to the people and the people to the land. (Hear, hear.) He was glad to find there people of all shades of political opinion who were in earnest and whose hearts

were in sympathy with this pressing problem. It was a pressing problem, and it was one which was not going to be dealt with this week, this year, or next year; but something must be done both to remedy the existing evil and to provide against its recurrence in future years. (Hear, hear.) He would suggest that the Conference should adopt some resolution on the lines of those which the reader embodied in his paper. He would further suggest that they place on record their sense of the necessity of adapting education in rural areas more to the requirements of children brought up in rural districts. He was impressed by this fact, that the education given to children in rural areas was not an education calculated to induce them to remain in the rural districts. (Hear, hear.) He believed that the education given these children produced in their minds the idea that there was something a little degrading, something a little disgraceful in being engaged in manual labour in the processes of agriculture. They should have education more fitted to the requirements of the children in rural districts. They should be educated in such a way as to produce in their minds the idea that work upon the land was a most necessary and a most honourable calling and that there was nothing disgraceful in it. If they could do this, probably in course of years they would be able to arrest the tide of young manhood and womanhood flowing from rural areas to large towns, and this would have a tendency to prevent in future such a large amount of unemployment. (Applause.) He believed they could do very good work in this way if they could induce the Government to so regulate the Educational Code for rural areas as to dispel in the minds of children the idea that it was something more honourable to be a clerk or a typewriter than an agricultural labourer. (Hear, hear.) As it is, they found that as soon as children grew up and were able to leave the rural districts they sought employment in large towns, where, no doubt, they got better wages and more liberty for a time, but by-and-by they were thrown into the ranks of the unemployed. He hoped they would adopt some resolution which perhaps might assist the President of the Local Government Board in formulating a Bill to put before the House of Commons. (Applause.)

The PRESIDENT said they had had an able paper and a very good debate, and he thought there had been a good deal said with which they all agreed. One or two points struck him which had not been touched upon, and which he wanted briefly to look upon. First of all, as to the Bill itself. He agreed with one speaker, who said that the Bill was a failure because it only applied to towns, and certain areas had no power by which they could form Distress Committees to carry out the provisions of the Bill. He did think that a measure such as the Unemployed Bill should have been applicable not only to towns but to urban districts. (Hear, hear.) The next point about the Bill which he was disappointed in was this, that while it gave power to levy a rate of a halfpenny in the pound that money had to be used exclusively for administration purposes. That to his mind was a

huge mistake. In this way: it naturally led the man in the street—who did not stop to think about such things for himself—to come to the conclusion that “Here’s an Act of Parliament passed to give employment to the unemployed.” The man made his application, and the Committee were put into an ignominious position. All they could do was to register his name and take the particulars necessary for registration. As regards giving him work, until that was provided by another authority the Distress Committee could do nothing. To his mind that was a cruel mistake. (Hear, hear.) The next weak point in the Bill was the elaboration of all the costly machinery of administration. The system of creating labour bureaux in localities where Distress Committees were formed was to his mind of very little value, for this reason: the labour bureaux were in certain districts, and the unemployed were in those districts, therefore there was a lack of employment in those districts. The labour bureaux, to be of any service, must be on the lines adopted in France and Germany, and, he believed, in Switzerland as well. They must be national labour bureaux. (Hear, hear.) If they were under a Government department they would be able to meet the demand and supply it, and they should be so arranged instead of having them in the districts where the want of employment was. When a man went into a labour bureau and gave all the particulars necessary, he had a right to expect that at least the labour bureau would be in a position to say whether it could offer him work. (Hear, hear.) What the new Bill would do none of them could tell; but he was certain of this, that there was no one measure that would meet this very big question. (Hear, hear.) It was one of the most difficult questions they could have to deal with. Even at this Conference various speakers had various ideas, but there was one unanimous idea, and there was a good deal in it, and that was the question of land. No doubt, if the land laws were better adjusted for small holdings, and there were more facilities for breaking up large portions of land into small allotments, it would be of advantage. He was very much struck with some letters which appeared in the papers at the end of last year from Kentish farmers. While in London there were being held huge demonstrations by unemployed men these farmers were pointing out that they wanted men and could not get them, and they sent applications to some of the London Distress Committees, but the men never came. That struck him as very remarkable, especially when people held a strong idea that this question of land and farm colonies, and such like, were the only means of settling the unemployed difficulty. Another thing which had been rather discounted to-day was the question of emigration. Some people seemed to think that emigration was practically sending men to penal servitude. They must recognise that this was one of the smallest countries in the world, and one of the largest populations, which increased more rapidly than in any other country. We had sister countries which we called the colonies, and he thought that it should be a matter

of as much pride for an English workman to work in the sister colonies as here. (Hear, hear.) We had Canada, South Africa, and other colonies. What did it mean? If English people did not go and populate these countries, in Canada they would have American people who would go there, and in a few years the American people would predominate, and Canada might cease to be a colony of this country. (Hear, hear.) Would it not be better to have a colony which belonged to us, and belonged to us honourably, populated by our own people? He would not discourage the sending to it of our best manhood and womanhood. (Hear, hear.) One of the speakers made a remark to the effect that he thought there was a rule by which emigrants had to be tested medically. To his mind that was a very necessary precaution. When they were sending people to a colony they wanted to be sure that they would not take with them any disease that might be transmitted to others. Why there should be this reluctance to send our over-population when it would benefit them to emigrate, he did not know. There might be a good many there, himself included, whose relatives had benefited by emigration. One of his boys wanted to be a farmer, and he started in this country and worked at practical farming. With the experience he gained he knew perfectly well that he could never make a way in this country, and he said he wanted to go to Canada. He went to Canada, where he was now working just the same as an ordinary working man. That was the class of youth they wanted to encourage, and if they could get young men, or even old men, to open out our colonies in that spirit, they might depend upon it that however much this old country of ours might go back, there would be that powerful alliance with our children in our colonies which would ever make the name of the English as a British people great in the civilised world. (Applause.) Another point which he thought there would have been some remarks about was immigration. He knew it was a very debatable subject as to whether or not there should be a limit placed upon the immigrants coming into this country. No doubt in large towns especially there was a continually growing and very large foreign population. While he for one prided himself on this country being a free country, and being a home for even the political refugee, at the same time he recognised the fact that there was such a tremendous number of our own people having a difficulty to get constant work, and with this large flood of immigrants coming into the country, it was a question with him as to whether the Government ought not to put some limit to it. (Hear, hear.) Altogether he thought this paper and discussion would do good. It would give new ideas to the various delegates, who would go back to their own districts, and if they had such a hard winter as last, they would no doubt, even with the defective Act of Parliament they were called upon to administer, be inclined to administer it with that warm-hearted charity and feeling of justice necessary. They should all have a very great feeling of gratitude to Her Majesty

the Queen for opening the fund. (Applause.) If Her Majesty had not done so the whole thing would have been a farce and an injustice to the poor people. It was Her Majesty's kind and warm-hearted feeling which prompted her to start that fund which was so nobly responded to. It placed the Committees in such a position that they were able to the best of their abilities to tide over last winter. Whether a similar fund would be started next winter he did not know, but unless such a fund was started, or unless the present law was amended before the winter came, it would be a very serious matter if they had a hard winter to deal with. (Applause.)

Mr CRAIGHILL moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr West for his able paper, and expressed the hope that they would have the pleasure of another paper from him at no distant date. (Applause.)

The motion was carried by acclamation.

Mr WEST, in replying, said the criticism which had been passed upon the paper had been in the direction of what he had omitted rather than what he had said. That came from his training as a parson. He was given a text, and he stuck to that text. Had he been a layman he might not have done so. (Laughter and applause.) He was not asked for a solution for the unemployed problem; if he had been he might have done something in that direction. He had said that all efforts for some time to come could only be tentative and experimental, and that a final solution must be found in the reorganisation of our industrial system. He could sum up that sentence in one word, and that word began with an "S." (Laughter and applause.) Canon Walker had alluded to the land question. In the agricultural returns for 1905 it was calculated that there were 12,500,000 acres of land that would not produce a single hundred-weight of hay. This was a fact, and not a biased theory. That that land could be satisfactorily used and prove remunerative had been proved by Lord Carrington, President of the Board of Agriculture, who had pointed out that men on his estate obtaining land at the same rent as farmers made a clear average return of from 20s. to 26s. per week. Why did people go to the colonies? Because land was held there under better conditions than here. Give us the same conditions here, and there would be no reason at all for emigration. (Hear, hear.) As regards the drink question, he thought that was an exploded theory. He once held it, but after gaining knowledge he gave it up—(laughter)—the theory, he meant, not the drink. (Renewed laughter.) Unemployment was a social problem and must have social causes. Drink was not a social cause; it was an individual cause. Drink was not worth considering as a cause as regards the whole social problem. Another gentleman who raised his ire very much was the gentleman who held forth on the philosophy of self-help. If there was one form of philosophy he loathed, it was the philosophy of self-help. It was inconsistent. A man joined a trades union. Why? Because he could not help himself. (Laughter and applause.) He found that the philosophy of self-help was not

carrying him very far, and it was necessary for him to have the help and co-operation of his fellows. He was pleased that the discussion had assumed such a high level. He thought it showed a progressive spirit. After all, if they were agreed on certain principles a solution was bound to come. First of all they said that a man has a right to live. If they were agreed on that, then they said he has a right to the means to live. Thirdly, they said that it is the duty of the State to provide means to live if a man could not get them otherwise. If they accepted these principles he thought they would find a way out of the difficulty. After all, the question as a whole was a question of human life. They were dealing with a question which involved the welfare in every sense of the word of human life. (Applause.)

The Conference then adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 18TH JULY.

The PRESIDENT took the chair at half-past nine o'clock, when the business meeting was held.

The TREASURER (Mr J. W. Gibson, Newcastle) presented the balance-sheet, which showed a balance against the Conference of 8s. 5d.

Mr S. SCOTT (Tynemouth) proposed, and Canon WATERTON (Carlisle) seconded, the re-election of Mr R. Affleck as President of the Conference, both gentlemen referring to the interest which he took in the work, and to the valuable services he had rendered.

The motion was cordially agreed to.

On the motion of Mr GEO. CRAIGHILL (Gateshead), the Rev. A. F. Curwen was unanimously re-elected Vice-President.

The Conference heartily agreed to the re-election of the Rev. Canon Walker as Honorary Secretary, and of Mr J. W. Gibson as Honorary Treasurer.

The representatives on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences were re-appointed, and last year's Committee of the Northern District Conference were re-elected without change.

Mr H. W. WALTON (Alnwick) proposed that next year's meeting of the Conference be held at Keswick, and this was unanimously agreed to.

Mr SAMUEL ADAMS (Clerk to the Auckland Union) then read the following paper:—

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL
COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906.

BY MR SAMUEL ADAMS,

Clerk, Auckland Union.

(NOTE.—*The figures in brackets refer to the numbered paragraphs of the Committee's Report.*)

THOSE of us who have had the pleasure and privilege of having been associated for many years with the administration of the Poor Laws can easily recall numerous Conferences at which the subject of Vagrancy has been carefully considered and wisely debated. It is not so easy, however, to recall the multitudinous proposals which have from time to time been made for removing the vagrant from off the face of the earth; proposals which those who made them firmly believed would, if adopted, be certain to accomplish the desired end, but all of which were found by those who tried them to lamentably fail in their purpose, notwithstanding that many of them became embodied in Acts of Parliament, and in Orders of the Poor Law Commissioners, the Poor Law Board, or the Local Government Board.

Vagrancy as a profession still flourishes, and the happy vagrant still goes on his way rejoicing in spite of barbarous penal laws extending to branding and mutilation and even to the death penalty, under the shadow of which he passed his days in the olden time, and in spite of the punishments under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, to which he is now liable, and in spite of the compulsory detention, the task of work, the spare diet, the isolation, and the detested bath to which he became generally subject, as a consequence of the passing of the Pauper Inmates' Discharge and Regulation Act, 1871, and the Casual Poor Act, 1882.

The fact of the failure either to repress or to reform

the habitual vagrant is evident; the reason for such failure is not so apparent.

Why is it that the life of a tramp, notwithstanding all its natural and artificial hardships, is so attractive that "once a tramp always a tramp" has become a proverb which expresses a truth too painfully obvious? The reason seems to be hidden away in the depths of our essential being.

It may be because such a life is the outcome of the desire which appears to be inherent in our fallen human nature to endeavour to enjoy existence with as little self-sacrifice as possible, and with an abounding willingness to sacrifice other people for our own personal benefit. (This life, however, as you will agree, is not a characteristic exclusively distinctive of the class whom we are considering, it being equally observable in many who do not "tramp," but who ride from place to place in carriages.)

It may be because public opinion is not yet sufficiently educated to condemn as pernicious and as a danger to society the practice of living without work, but on the contrary expresses itself in terms of envious adulation in respect of those who are able to do so as a result of the receipt by them of charitable bequests on a larger scale than usually falls to the lot of the vagrant.

It may be because we all have within us a soul which was primarily intended to enjoy and still longs to enjoy freedom, and many fancy freedom can only be found in the absence of all control. We can imagine the habitual vagrant at a certain point in his career giving expression to sentiments such as those contained in lines of Walt Whitman :—

"From this hour I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary
bonds,
Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,
With undeniable will divesting myself of the holds that would
hold me."

It may be because of the encouragement which the vagrant receives from the undisciplined generosity of those who have not learnt to govern their beneficent impulses by a wise discretion, and who are, consequently, always ready to give alms indiscriminately when there is the slightest apparent need, irrespective of the deserts of, and regardless of the consequences to, the needy one.

It may be because of the total absence from the vagrant's experience of all reformatory influences, so that he is left alone with the dead weight of an unregenerate nature dragging him always to lower depths, in which he not only quite forgets the possibility of his rising to higher things, but loses the desire to rise.

It may be all of these causes (and there are probably others which do not occur to us) which have combined to render futile all efforts hitherto made by the State or by philanthropic societies for the repression or reformation of the habitual vagrant.

That the habitual vagrant is a disgrace to himself and a pest to society is, however, a recognised fact by all persons who think about the subject, and especially is it clearly seen by those who spend their lives, as Poor Law administrators do, not only in ministering to the necessities of the poor and needy, but in ceaselessly studying how to raise them from their low estate.

Petition after petition has been presented to Parliament and to the Local Government Board praying that steps may be taken in this direction or in that so that the goal aimed at might be reached, and those of us who are familiar with the intricacies and difficulties of the subject can well understand how necessary it was that the fullest possible information should be obtained on every phase of the subject by those in authority, so that a right judgment might be come to as to the likeliest remedy for the acknowledged evil.

In July 1904, the then President of the Local Government Board appointed a Departmental Com-

mittee to inquire and report with respect to England and Wales as to—

1. The law applicable to persons of the vagrant class (*i.e.*, the statutory provisions and the bye-laws, rules, and regulations made thereunder) ;
2. The administration of the law applicable to those persons ; and
3. Any amendment which should be made in it or in its administration.

The Committee was composed of seven gentlemen well qualified for the responsible position, and the services of a most able official of the Local Government Board as Secretary were assigned to them. They held thirty-six meetings and examined fifty-six witnesses, and in February of this year they presented a unanimous Report so far as it relates to extra-metropolitan areas. The Report occupies 123 foolscap pages of print, the evidence fills 382 foolscap pages, and there is an appendix of 208 pages containing, as useful for reference, copies of official papers, memoranda, statistical returns, charts, maps, &c.

It is of course impossible that a very large number of persons, although they may be keenly interested in the question, should be able to find time to wade through all this voluminous, albeit most instructive literature, and so I have been asked to read a paper on the subject with the object of putting before the Conference the more prominent features of the Report as a basis for discussion. The Report is so full that I must not attempt in the limits of this paper to give a digest of the whole of its contents, though, perhaps, a very brief summary of them may be useful to those who have not had an opportunity of reading the Report itself.

SUMMARY OF REPORT.

INTRODUCTION.—A statement is given of the appointment of the Committee, of the work done by it, and of the main conclusions arrived at (1-4).

CHAP. I. *Historical Summary*.—A digest of legislation on the subjects is given from the year 1331 (5 Ed. III., c. 14) to the year 1905 (5 Ed. VII., c. 13) (1-45).

CHAP. II. *Statistics of Vagrancy*.—Figures are given showing an enormous increase of late years in the number of vagrants (47-50). One-fourth of the prison population is made up of vagrants (59). The number of persons with no settled home and no visible means of subsistence is estimated (74) to reach at times of trade depression as high a total as 70,000 or 80,000, whilst in times of industrial activity it might not exceed 30,000 or 40,000.

CHAP. III. *Description of Vagrants*.—Vagrants are divided into four classes (78-84).

CHAP. IV. *Casual Wards*.—The existing system is fully described, and the conclusion arrived at is that diversity of practice in the different Unions is the most striking characteristic of the present system (88), and that it is the cause of the failure of the present system (113). Transfer of casual wards to police is recommended, and certain objections to this course are answered (119-147). Sundry amendments in the regulations are suggested (148-152).

CHAP. V. *Assistance for Bona-fide Work-Seekers*.—Opinion is expressed that some better provision should be made to assist the men genuinely in search of work (155). Different "way-ticket" systems are described as adopted in various parts of England and on the Continent, and a recommendation is made that the police should be empowered to issue a way-ticket to work-seekers under conditions set out (179-181).

CHAP. VI. *Punishment of Vagrant Offenders*.—Short sentences are condemned (196, 197). Prison is said to be not the proper place for punishing vagrant offenders (216).

Habitual Vagrants.—It is suggested that this class should be as far as possible treated not as criminals but as persons requiring detention on account of their mode of life (221). The class should be "defined by statute." A suggested definition is given (221). Committal of this class to a labour colony for a term of not less than six months nor more than three years is recommended (222). Identification.—The difficulty of identification can now, it is thought, be surmounted by means of finger prints (224).

CHAP. VII. *Labour Colonies.*—An account is given of many labour colonies both abroad and in England, which were visited by the Committee, and in respect of which evidence was taken; and a scheme for the establishment of labour colonies is set out in detail (225-305).

CHAP. VIII. *Dietary for Casual Wards and Labour Colonies.*—It is recommended that one uniform and definite diet for the inmates of casual wards should be laid down and adhered to throughout the country (308).

CHAP. IX. *Cost of Buildings.*—The cost of wards in different Unions is given, showing a variation of from as much as £346 per head in the Hackney Union to as low as £33 per head in the Tavistock and Horn-castle Unions (317).

CHAP. X. *Common Lodging-houses and Shelters.*—These are described as existing in various parts of the country, and free shelters and free meals are said to constitute a serious evil (359).

CHAP. XI. *Spread of Disease by Vagrants.*—Statistics are given showing that vagrants are chief carriers of small-pox (369). General adoption of bye-laws as to common lodging-houses and constant watching of common lodging-houses by sanitary inspectors are recommended (374, 375).

CHAP. XII. *Sleeping Out.*—A suggestion is made

that "sleeping out" should be made an offence whenever it occurs under circumstances which might render it a nuisance or source of danger to the community (384).

CHAP. XIII. *Begging and Indiscriminate Charity*.—It is stated that indiscriminate alms-giving is the main support of vagrancy, and that it is not deemed to be possible to convince the public of the harm that is done by the practice (388).

CHAP. XIV. *Vagrants Wandering to their own Hurt*.—Every facility should be given to vagrants of this class to go into the Workhouse when they wish to do so (391).

CHAP. XV. *Discharged Soldiers*.—The Committee state that notwithstanding prevalent reports to the contrary they see no sufficient reason for believing that at present there is a larger proportion of old soldiers on the roads than was formerly the case (396).

CHAP. XVI. *Gipsies, Hawkers, Pedlars, and Hop Pickers*.—Existing powers are deemed to be reasonably adequate for the purpose of controlling this class (397-402).

CHAP. XVII. *Women*.—The question of vagrant women is thought to be comparatively unimportant because of the smallness of their number. Vagrant women should be received into the Workhouse (410).

CHAP. XVIII. *Children*.—The dealing with vagrant children is regarded by the Committee as one of the most important questions included within the reference to them (411). They say that the number of vagrant children has been greatly exaggerated, and that from 2 to 4½ per cent. of the total number of vagrants is the estimated proportion (412). The difficulty of dealing with them is referred to, and the Committee think that those of habitual vagrants should be sent to an industrial school, or be dealt with in such other way as may seem expedient (428).

CHAP. XIX. *Summary of Recommendations.*—The principal recommendations of the Committee are set out briefly (429).

CONCLUSION.—The Committee conclude their Report by remarking that the whole history of vagrancy in this and every other country indicates that the vagrant cannot be suppressed, but must be specially treated for his mode of life and his disinclination to work (434), and that in their opinion indiscriminate dole-giving is the real cause of vagrancy.

I may here perhaps take the liberty of remarking that no Report of Royal Commission or of Departmental Committee which I have ever read has appeared to me to have been more exhaustive of the subject dealt with than this one, or clearer in its arrangement and expression, or more closely in accord with the evidence upon which it is based. The warmest thanks of all who have to deal with the subject are due to the Committee and their Secretary. You will not, I hope, because I have said this, accuse me of inconsistency if it should appear later that I find myself unable to regard the evidence upon which the Report is based as conclusive, or to fully concur in the recommendations of the Committee, though no doubt you will be quite justified if you accuse me of great presumption.

Although it is comforting to be assured by a member of the Committee (Sir William Chance) that "the Committee sat down to the table with absolutely open and unbiassed minds on the subject," yet the great majority of the witnesses examined were men who had previously expressed themselves strongly in favour of the main conclusions come to by the Committee. Many of them had not been closely connected with the administration of the Poor Law, and in certain cases weight seems to have been attached to evidence which many of us could not accept. As a typical instance of

this the evidence of Mr Mitchell, Chairman of the Wiltshire Vagrancy Committee (question 1863), is taken as a basis for the remark of the Committee that "the evidence shows the practical impossibility of attaining uniformity of treatment under the present casual ward system" (15). Mr Mitchell says: "There is a very simple reason (for the difference of treatment of vagrants in different Unions), each Board of Guardians merely treats the casuals in the way that they think is cheapest, and that they may get rid of them quickest from their own Union. *They do not in the least care about the casual pauper as a whole, they only want to kick him out as quickly as they can, and on the cheapest terms.*" Is that evidence warranted by the facts? I think not.

The four classes into which the Committee divide vagrants (78-84) are—

1. The *bona-fide* working man travelling in search of employment ;
2. Men willing to undertake casual labour for a short time, but objecting to or being unfit for continued work ;
3. Men professing to be in search of work but who have no desire to find it ; and
4. Unemployable, old, and infirm persons.

The two main recommendations of the Committee, and the only ones to which I purpose directing the attention of the Conference to-day, are—

1. The substitution of the police authority for the Poor Law authority as the body responsible for the local relief of vagrants (including work-seekers) and the management of casual wards (120).
2. The establishment of labour colonies under Government regulations to which habitual vagrants may be committed, and in which they may be forcibly detained, such colonies to be provided, not by the State,

but in the first instance by local authorities or voluntary agencies or individual philanthropy under strict supervision by the State, assisted as regards maintenance expenses from the rates or the national exchequer (276 *et seq.*).

Observations of the Committee in support of these recommendations are set out at length as regards casual wards and assistance for *bona-fide* work-seekers on pages 17 to 50 of the Report, and as regards labour colonies on pages 61 to 87.

1. *Casual Wards*.—The arguments advanced in favour of the proposed transfer of control of casual wards from Guardians to police are mainly as follows :—

(a.) Lack of uniformity of administration (113, 119);

(b.) The practical impossibility of obtaining uniformity under the present system (115);

(c.) Administration by the police would be uniform (127); and

(d.) The high cost of the present system (118).

Lack of uniformity at present may be admitted but not because Guardians of the Poor and not the police are the administrators. It is partly because of the discretion which the Local Government Board has left Guardians to exercise in the giving of directions to officers of Workhouses and casual wards with respect to the discharge of any vagrants before the full period of detention has expired, and before the completion of the prescribed task of work. It is partly due to the particular circumstances of different localities, and to the fact that there is not the same sort of accommodation in every Union, in some Unions separate cells being provided and in others what are termed associated wards; and, of course, the diet also varies in different Unions.

But we may fairly ask, Why should it be thought that uniformity will be secured by the substitution of the police for the Guardians? Is there any *prima facie*

reason for concluding that there would be greater uniformity of action by the 200 police authorities in the kingdom than there is by the 600 Poor Law authorities that now deal with the vagrant? If there be, it does not present itself to me. Existing casual wards are to be used as far as practicable (132), so that there will not be uniformity as regards accommodation.

If, as is proposed (308), there is to be "one uniform and definite diet for vagrants laid down and adhered to throughout the country," would it be easier for the officers of the Workhouse and the casual wards to provide it whilst under the control of the police than it would be if they remained under the control of the Guardians? Of course it would not.

Even if we admit (which we do not, for practical advantages are often lost for the sake of sentimental uniformity) that in the individual treatment of vagrants it is necessary that strict uniformity should be observed, is it to be imagined that the separate units of the army of police throughout the country have been so accurately cast in the same mould that they have but one uniform temperament, and will consequently practise a hard-and-fast cast-iron method in their dealings with the diverse peculiarities of the individuals with whom they will have to deal? Not only is this not desirable, it is impossible.

In this connection it is interesting to note the strong comments made by the Committee upon the lack of uniformity in regard to the punishment of vagrant offenders. They say, "There is no uniformity whatever in the sentences for vagrancy offences"; "The sentences given by stipendiary magistrates appear to be as little governed by any fixed principles as those inflicted by the unpaid justices" (186); "The same absence of uniformity appears to exist in the decisions of the magistrates sitting in the Metropolitan police courts"; "In dealing with cases of begging, whilst some magistrates give from fourteen days to a month,

others discharge the man on his promising to leave the town" (187); and they conclude the paragraph with this pregnant remark, "It is hardly necessary to say that in places where no sentence is given the police cease to bring cases of begging before the magistrates, and the offence continues unchecked."

Thus the Committee themselves admit that the police are ultimately practically powerless unless they have behind them the power of the magistrates, and it follows that unless uniformity of action by the magistrates can be secured it is hopeless to expect uniformity of action by the police.

As regards the cost of the present system as compared with the proposed new system, I fail to find in the Report any indication of a possible reduction by the proposed change, but on the contrary indications of a probable increase. It is suggested (119) that the area of chargeability should be extended, but that only means that the burden of the expenditure should be equalised, not that it would be lessened. Although a few small out-of-the-way casual wards may possibly be closed, the services of the staff would not be dispensed with, their duties nearly always comprising other than those solely connected with the wards. It is admitted that additional wards would have to be built and staffed on the main lines of travel (130), and we may be pretty sure that the police authorities, not being immediately subject to the criticism or control of the ratepayers, would be ready to provide the most up-to-date accommodation, and be somewhat lavish in expenditure, so that the argument that the change would be economical is certainly not a sound one.

But on general grounds, notwithstanding the evidence given to the contrary, and particularly that given by representatives of those who would of course be only too glad to be relieved from the personal work and re-

sponsibility involved in connection with casual wards (124), I see no valid reason why the care of the vagrant should be transferred from the Guardians to the police. The vagrant surely comes under the definition of the "poor," and though he may belong to a special class he is none the less a fitting subject to be dealt with by "Guardians of the Poor." The masters of Workhouses, relieving officers, and superintendents of casual wards are men who have learnt to deal sympathetically, and at the same time discriminately with the poor according to their needs, and we know well that it takes much thought and many years of training to become proficient in this vocation. The police have not been so trained; their training has been on different lines altogether, and although we may well believe that most of them have a kind heart, the very nature of their primary duties requires them to keep it hidden.

Approximate uniformity of action in the treatment of vagrants in the casual wards is no doubt desirable, and could to a large extent easily be obtained without any change of administration, and without adding a fraction to the present cost, if the principle were recognised, as I venture to think it ought to be, that the whole of the cost of maintenance of vagrants should be borne by the State. Because a needy man happens to be passing through a particular locality, that is no good reason why the ratepayers there should be burdened with his maintenance. The care of him morally belongs to the whole community of which he is a member, and that community is the nation at large. Repayment to Boards of Guardians of the outlay by them could be made by the Treasury on the certificate of the Government Auditor as to the actual expenditure, combined with a report from the Local Government Board's District Inspector that the regulations laid down by that Board had been faithfully observed. No new wards would have specially to be built, not a single additional officer need be appointed, no item of

further expense would be incurred, and the result desired would as far as practicable be attained.

If, however, it be thought that the county area as suggested by the Committee (129) should be the area of chargeability outside separate police boroughs, let the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of all Boards of Guardians in each county be constituted a Board for the purpose of framing rules and regulations for the county, and let the repayment from county funds depend still upon the Auditor's certificate and the Inspector's report, and we may rely upon it that in this way uniformity of action could be secured for the county without difficulty, and with a very trifling expense for clerical work. The Board, after having framed the regulations, would probably not have to meet more frequently than once in five years.

Then there is the strong objection which the Committee themselves call attention to and attempt to answer (126), "That in view of the close association between the police and the criminal classes, it would be unfair to the *bona-fide* wayfarer to give the police control over the building in which he may have to seek his night's lodging." The Committee answer this by remarking that the *bona-fide* wayfarer supplies but a very small proportion of the total number of vagrants; that the police would not treat this class *more harshly* (the italics are mine) than is done under the present system; that he might properly look to the police for guidance on his way; that the police deal already with other classes than criminal classes; and that now in many cases the police act as assistant relieving officers for vagrants. The answer of the Committee is to my mind quite inconclusive. The fewness of their number is rather a reason why other than police supervision might be found for them; there is no reason why they should be treated harshly at all; and they can still look to the police for guidance on their way if they need it. The *bona-fide* working-man truly seeking work is one

whom we should respect and help in every possible way by making his journey easy and his burden light, not by putting him into the position of one who has to report himself at the police station just as though he were a ticket-of-leave man, and making him undergo the catechism indicated in paragraphs 178 and 179 of the Report, and submitting him to the indignity of having his "finger prints" taken like a felon.

For the reasons I have given I think this Conference would be justified in passing a resolution disagreeing with the recommendation of the Committee that the police authority be substituted for the Poor Law authority as the body responsible for the local relief of vagrants and the management of casual wards.

I should much like, did time and printer's space permit, to consider at some length the exceedingly important question of how to assist the *bona-fide* workman truly seeking work, but I must refrain. The Committee deal exhaustively with the subject in their Report (154-185), and, with the exception of the points to which I have already alluded, I think their recommendations are sound so far as they go. I may say, however, in a word, and not for the purpose of raising discussion on the subject, that I would start him on his journey with a shilling or two in his pocket, substitute the Workhouse master for the police officer, and, for a certain *strictly limited period*, provide the man at each Workhouse on his way some work suitable to his capacity *and pay him for it when done*—pay him enough for it to enable him to feel that he was to some extent still earning his living and retaining his manhood—enough, at any rate, to enable him to reach his next stage without begging and to pay for his keep there either in the casual ward or the common lodging-house as he might prefer. If all his money should disappear *en route* he would cease to be regarded as one of the class to be helped onward in this way.

I must not stay to support these suggestions with

argument, but must hasten on and deal as briefly as I may with the second recommendation of the Committee which we have to consider, namely, that relating to habitual vagrants, a class as distinct from that of the honest workman seeking work as the devil is from an archangel. (The distinction may perhaps sound rather severe, but to see the appropriateness of the comparison we have only to remember that even these were at one time both of the same high order from which the former "by transgression fell," and that there are some who hold that even he may yet possibly, through the purifying fires, regain his lost estate.)

The Committee report (221) that their view is "that means should be provided to allow of the habitual vagrant being dealt with otherwise than under the Vagrancy Act, and that as far as possible he should be treated, not as a criminal, but as a person requiring detention on account of his mode of life." For this purpose they propose "that a class of habitual vagrants should be defined by statute, and that this class should include any person who has been three or more times convicted during a period of say twelve months of certain offences now coming under the Vagrancy Act, namely, sleeping out, begging, refusing to perform task of work in casual wards, or refusing or neglecting to maintain himself so that he becomes chargeable to the poor rate." They suggest (222) "that persons coming within this definition should be committed by a petty sessional court to Quarter Sessions or Assizes and there dealt with in the same way as the incorrigible rogue, with the exception that the sentence should be committal to a labour colony for a term not exceeding three years."

With all of this I entirely agree, except the suggested limitation of the term of committal to three years.

The habitual vagrant as defined above is one who has no moral right to be allowed to wander about the

country at his own sweet will and pleasure. He is not simply a criminal but much more a pestilent fellow corrupting and contaminating all with whom he is brought into contact. He suffers from "a mind diseased" as certainly as any inmate of our lunatic asylums, and he ought to be kept under strict surveillance, and treated with the most painstaking and skilled attention until he has recovered from his deplorable condition. Punishment except as a remedial restorative should not be thought of in his case. I would therefore urge that he should only be allowed to leave the labour colony when those able and appointed to judge are satisfied that his willingness to work has returned to him. If he has recovered before the end of twelve months, let him come out; if he has not recovered at the end of twelve years, let him remain in.

I know that I shall be met with the old cry of "interference with the liberty of the subject," but if I have diagnosed the habitual vagrant's malady aright he has no more right to liberty, and is no more suited for it, than the dangerous lunatic or the delirious small-pox patient.

A plea for incarceration and continued treatment until recovery may be maintained from the Committee's own statement (276), that the information obtained by them as to existing labour colonies at home and abroad points to the fact that, "whether voluntary or compulsory, they exercise but little permanent reformatory influence." We may, I think, well attribute this result to the fact that in the voluntary colonies a man cannot be detained at all against his will, and that in the compulsory colonies the period of his legal detention is much too short. But be this as it may, it is clear that if the reformatory influence proves ineffective in any particular case, the man is no more fit to be at large at the end of the three years than he was at the beginning. The Committee seem to recognise this, for they

say (286), "In some cases there might be advantage in the court giving an indeterminate sentence under which the colonist might be detained until in the opinion of the managers of the colony he was qualified for discharge."

The Committee deprecate the provision of labour colonies by the State in the first instance (277), although they think it probable that Government institutions for the detention of the more difficult cases will eventually be found necessary (278). They state that in their opinion "in starting a new scheme it is a sound principle to trust in the first instance to the enterprise of local authorities, voluntary associations, or individual philanthropy under strict supervision by the State and assisted financially from the rates or the national exchequer." The reasons given for the Committee's objection to the provision of labour colonies by the State seem to me to be feeble in the extreme. For instance,—the Government would not know how many colonies to provide (278); they could not find all at once a thoroughly competent staff for a sufficient number of colonies (279); voluntary philanthropic agencies could bring to bear more effective reformatory influences than can be exercised under an official system (280), and, strangest of all, labour colonies if established by the State would inevitably have to be all of the same type! Surely such reasons cannot on calm consideration be regarded as either weighty or conformable to fact.

The Committee recommend with certain modifications (284) the scheme suggested in the Bill which was introduced into the House of Commons by Sir John Gorst in 1904. "That Bill would permit of the committal of habitual vagrants for a period of not exceeding three years to any place certified by a Secretary of State as a labour colony. It provides for the Secretary of State making regulations for the management of labour colonies and the treatment of

their inmates, and for a contribution being made from the exchequer towards the expense of maintenance, while certain local authorities (County and Borough Councils and Boards of Guardians) may contribute towards the establishment and maintenance of a colony, and may defray the whole or any part of the cost of any individual inmate's maintenance." The Committee take exception to the clause in the Bill which would permit of the treatment of voluntary entrants in such labour colonies as they suggest (286); they deem it right that the State should pay "a substantial part of the cost of maintenance," and that local rates should pay a part (287); and they think that colonists should be allowed to earn by industry and good conduct, and as an incentive thereto, small sums of money, a portion of which should be retained until their discharge, and a portion handed over to them weekly to spend if they like at the canteen of the colony in the purchase of extra articles of food, tobacco, &c. (290).

The Committee say (293) that as a general rule the number of inmates of a colony should not exceed five hundred; that so far as they can judge a labour colony cannot be made a paying concern (295); that the weekly net cost of the colonist should not in the long run exceed 4s. or 5s. (303); that under the influences of the colony it may be possible to instil into the vagrant habits of work, but even if this should not be achieved by prolonged detention, the course proposed would be amply justified if it secured the protection of the public from the trouble and the nuisance which the habitual vagrant causes, the prevention of children being trained in his habits, and the deterrent of others from adopting this mode of life (434).

We have now considered most of the clauses of the Report which bear on the two main recommendations of the Committee, and I have, with perhaps unwarrantable temerity, given reasons for venturing to

differ from the recommendation as to the transfer of the local relief of vagrants and the management of vagrant wards from Guardians to police.

I agree that labour colonies should be established for the care and treatment of habitual vagrants, and that the scheme recommended by the Committee is in the main a good and practical one; but I think that the colonies should be provided and maintained by the State as a national duty, and not that so important and urgent a matter, affecting the interests and welfare of the country over its whole area equally, should be left to the initiative of local authorities, who would shrink from incurring large expenditure for the treatment of a class of persons not naturally their dependants.

DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT said the selected speaker, Mr J. W. Coulson, Clerk to the South Shields Union, was unable to be present, and he was sure they all regretted his absence owing to the death of a very dear relative; but fortunately his chairman, Mr Jos. Batey, had stepped into the breach. (Applause.)

Mr BATEY (South Shields) said he was extremely sorry Mr Coulson was unable to be present, the more so because he knew that Mr Coulson took a deep interest in this question. In opening the discussion, Mr Batey congratulated the reader on his very able paper. He had attended many conferences of one description and another, but he did not think he could remember papers of such a high tone as those read to-day and yesterday. (Applause.) It was difficult to find anything in the papers to criticise, there seemed to be so much with which they agreed. He would begin by reminding the Conference that they were discussing to-day another phase of the question they were discussing yesterday. Yesterday they were considering men who wanted work but could not get work; to-day they were considering men who ought to work but who did not like to work. (Laughter.) The first thought that struck him was, is this question really so pressing that the Government needs to deal with it? Personally he thought the time of the Government might be far better occupied in dealing with the genuine working man than in dealing with this aspect of the question. Their experience in his Union was that the question was not so pressing as at first sight might appear. In 1904 they relieved in the Shields Union 5,624

casuals ; but in the year 1905 that number had dropped to 3,555, a reduction of 2,069. Taking the first six months of 1905 and the first six months of this year up to June 1905, they relieved 1,622 casuals, and for the first six months of this year they relieved 1,519, again a reduction of 103, which struck them that the question did not seem so pressing as to merit the attention of the Government. The next thing that struck them was this—If the Government did deal with this question as suggested, would it make the matter better or worse? Personally he thought that to hand over the casual wards to the police would make the matter worse than at the present time. (Applause.) He agreed to the full with everything Mr Adams said on this aspect of the question, and he did think, as a Poor Law Guardian, that they should be prepared to fight the Government to the very last stitch in their proposal to take the casual wards and hand them over to the police. He approached this aspect of the question from another point of view—as a member of the Town Council. If casual wards were handed over to the police it would mean that more work would be laid upon Watch Committees of county boroughs, which had now got far too much work and did not want any more. (Hear, hear.) It would be repeating the mistake which the Government made when it abolished School Boards and handed over education to already overworked Town Councils. (Hear, hear.) Then there was the question which cropped up in the paper about the genuine working man. Speaking as a working man, he did not think it would be bettering the question in the least to send the genuine working man from the Workhouse Master to the police. At the present time and for some years their practice at South Shields had been to say to the Workhouse Master, "When you come across a genuine working man who wants to be out in search of work, deal with him, not as a real casual, but allow him to be out the first thing in the morning. Don't insist that he shall do his allotted task, but allow him out early so that he may be at the dock gates at six o'clock." This had been followed out again and again. (Applause.) The only bright spot in the Departmental Committee's Report to his mind was that which dealt with colonies for the ir reclaimable. He agreed with the provision of colonies for the ir reclaimable, and he agreed with the reader of the paper that these should not be left to local authorities, but should become national colonies. He thought they should not be satisfied with the Committee's suggestion of colonies, but that they should insist as far as they possibly could that such colonies are provided and that they are kept up at the expense of the nation. (Hear, hear.) Mr Adams had asked him if he would move a resolution, and when he had read it he thought the whole Conference would agree as to the wisdom of it. The resolution read :—

"That this Conference, whilst approving of the establishment of labour colonies for the treatment of habitual vagrants, disagrees with the recommendation of the Committee that the police authority be

substituted for the Poor Law authority as the body responsible for the local relief of vagrants and the management of casual wards." (Hear, hear.)

In moving it, he would just like to remark that the tramp, bad as he may be, as one gentleman said yesterday, is much a victim of the present industrial system. Some years ago he read Henry George's "Progress and Poverty," and the illustration the writer gave of this state of things was that of a thick wedge driven into the centre of society, and he said that those who were above the wedge were being lifted higher, whilst those beneath it were crushed lower down. He (the speaker) considered it the duty of Poor Law Guardians as social reformers to try to remove the wedge which was being driven into the centre of society and put it under the very lowest strata of society in order that they might uplift them to a higher order of life. (Applause.)

Mr L. SCOTT (South Shields) seconded the resolution.

Mr G. CRAIGHILL congratulated their old friend Mr Adams on the very able manner in which he had dealt with his subject. Mr Adams rather thought that he had been bold in criticising the Departmental Committee, but it might reassure him to know that the Committee of the Poor Law Unions Association had had this Report under consideration, and their report would be presented to the Council at its next meeting. Their recommendations on these two subjects were very much on the lines of those of Mr Adams. For instance, they said, with regard to casual wards and police, they did not approve of the Departmental Committee's recommendation, being of opinion that the proposal to transfer the administration of the existing casual wards to the police is surrounded with various practical difficulties, and they think it is not desirable nor convenient that a dual control of the wards should be set up. Regarding labour colonies they approved of the Departmental Committee's recommendation that they should be provided, but are of opinion that Boards of Guardians should be grouped in suitable areas to provide such labour colonies. They also recommended that such colonies should be established and governed by joint committees of Boards of Guardians, and that the establishment of such labour colonies should not be permissive but compulsory. (Hear, hear.) He thought if Mr Batey would adopt the gist of that in his resolution it would be a fair means of testing the feeling of the Conference.

Mr BATEY: I have no objection to that.

Mr C. T. STABLEFORTH (Newcastle) said he quite agreed with Mr Adams. He did not think that the Report of the Departmental Committee would help one whit in doing away with casual vagrancy. To his mind to hand over vagrants to the police would make the matter considerably worse than at the present time. There was a certain class of vagrants which he did not object to being dealt with harshly, but there was another class which it would be an everlasting

disgrace to this country if they were sent from town to town under the eye of the police. He referred more particularly to the respectable working man who had been compelled to go on the road as a means of getting a livelihood in some other district. (Hear, hear.) The question of vagrancy had been before the country ever since there had been such a thing as Poor Law, and he believed it would remain for many years to come. There had been many reforms advocated, but he was not quite sure that they had yet got one which was likely to reduce vagrants to any considerable extent. He thought they should have a penal colony where these vagrants might be detained, as Mr Adams said, not for three years only, but until such time as the authority was absolutely satisfied that they could be safely set at liberty. If they did this they would have a far better chance of stamping out vagrancy than they would have by any other means. (Applause.)

Canon WALKER asked if vagrants were to be handed over to the police; and if the existing casual wards were to be used, were they going to put two officers to manage one set of rooms?

Mr CRAIGHILL: You get dual control.

Canon WALKER: You get dual control, and there would be friction between the Workhouse Master and the police. It is very undesirable to put anybody to interfere with the duty of the Workhouse Master. (Hear, hear.)

Canon WATERTON (Carlisle) said he did not think any of them were against having labour colonies, but there was some difference of opinion on the question of maintenance. He thought it would be very unfair if this were laid on the shoulders of any particular Union or even group of Unions. It ought to be a national charge. Those who required to be put into these colonies did not really belong to any particular district; they were the Arabs of society, wandering about from one county to another, and it would be very difficult to find out their settlement. He was certainly most strongly in favour of making it a national charge on the exchequer.

Rev. J. GILL (South Shields) said one thing had struck him very much, and had no doubt struck other members of the Conference. That was the fact that on both sides there were very great difficulties. If they adopted the method which Mr Batey alluded to at South Shields—the method of suppression—they did not get much further. If, on the other hand, they agreed that it was desirable to have penal colonies, they had yet to convince public opinion—which was not yet convinced—of the need of penal colonies. (Hear, hear.) How were they to get to know? There was not much public opinion expressed in support of labour colonies. On the other hand, was not the sentiment of to-day insisting more and more on the liberty of individuals, and less and less inclined to that method which, no doubt, while eliminating a certain vagrant class, might damage the other class equally at the same time? In regard to suppression, he was not altogether pleased with what had been done at South Shields Work-

house. They had adopted a system of perhaps greater suppression, but they had simply driven the vagrants outside the walls of the Workhouse. He was told that at a certain brick-kiln thirty or forty men were known to be sleeping at night. Was it desirable that they should exercise suppression to get rid of them and drive them there? He was not complaining of their method, but it did not solve the problem. They wanted something more than driving them out of the neighbourhood. As to penal settlements, the problem was to convince public opinion that these are necessary. He could not imagine that the President of the Local Government Board would welcome an application for the establishment of penal settlements; in fact, he was given to understand that he is not at all favourable to it. As to the question of the children of vagrants. These were put down at from $2\frac{1}{2}$ to 4 per cent. It seemed to him rather a small percentage, but one depended upon the evidence of the Commission. He had seen three or four families where the children had been entirely demoralised by the peripatetic excursions of their parents. Three cases came under his notice where three families of labourers in South Shields were reduced to poverty through want of employment. They were respectable men to start with. They were compelled to go on the road to seek employment. They took their children and wives, and came back again after a certain number of months. He found that they were very much worse for their visits. The same thing occurred last year, and this summer they had again to tramp. They were demoralising the children, demoralising themselves, and sinking into the habitual tramp. He thought, as Mr Batey rightly remarked, there was a very real and close connection between vagrancy and unemployment. When dealing with vagrancy they wanted also to deal with unemployment. Some industrial system of the future might be able to grapple with the subject. In dealing with the children, would it not be possible, after a certain number of convictions for vagrancy, to make it compulsory to take away the children of vagrants and place them in an industrial school? It seemed to him that they were providing future vagrants if they allowed the children to go on and get accustomed to the road, whereas if they got them early removed to the Workhouse and to school it might be possible to stem to some extent the tide of vagrancy springing up for those who were begotten by vagrants. (Applause.)

Mr J. Ross (Maryport) said he thought vagrancy was very largely a question of unemployment. The first thing this Government ought to settle should be the provision of work for those willing to work. If that were accomplished, then, to his mind, the question of vagrancy could be very easily dealt with. He had met that class during his experience as a Poor Law Guardian. He had known a man start life fairly well. Through being out of work he had to go on tramp. By going on tramp he found that he could live without work. The Government had made provision that he should be fed at certain stages of his journey, and the consequence was that instead

of having to lead the life of a fairly industrious labourer, the man adopted the mode of life which enabled him to live without constant work, and he became what they would call a habitual vagrant. That was not the only effect it had, but, having a family and taking that family with him, the children who belonged to him practically imbibed the same view of life, and the man not only became a habitual vagrant himself, but the children dependent upon him became habitual vagrants too, and the evil continued to roll on and on. To his mind this was one of the most important questions which Poor Law Guardians who took an interest in social reform could discuss. (Hear, hear.) As to who should deal with vagrants, he was inclined to the opinion that the Guardians were the fittest and most proper authority to deal with them. Guardians, as a rule, were men who lived amongst the people and knew their needs and local circumstances better than the policeman did. Generally speaking, Guardians were men with humanitarian feelings who were not under that strict discipline which the policeman was compelled to live under. He thought the question of dealing with vagrancy should be kept entirely in the hands of Guardians. (Hear, hear.) Everybody was desirous of putting an end to vagrancy. It was a danger to society, not only by bringing children into the world to continue the evil, but in passing from district to district vagrants often disseminated disease which cost the local authorities considerable sums of money to stamp out. He thought the Guardians of every Union should be empowered to approach the Local Government Board and tell them that in their Union there was a very large percentage of men out of work, perhaps through a strike, or perhaps through some works leaving the district and being closed. He thought the Guardians should not only have power to communicate with the Local Government Board pointing out the circumstances, but that they should also have power to spend public money with a view to providing work for the unemployed or for the vagrant on the road. Some people might say they could not provide this work without encroaching upon the work which the ordinary citizen performed; that if Guardians commenced certain works they would take away the labour of the men who were ordinarily industrious. They all knew that there were certain works which would be of very great public advantage if taken in hand at once. Not only would these be a great advantage to the community, but they would ultimately reap a fairly successful financial reward. Take their own case on the west coast. They had between Maryport and Silloth thousands of acres of land entirely covered by the sea. A very small set of works established between Maryport and Silloth and between Silloth and Scotland would reclaim at least 10,000 acres of land. It would not be very much cost to the community, but the ultimate success of the thing would be such that the Government would reap a decided advantage by having that land, which could be made very profitable if reclaimed. (Hear, hear.) Then they had

especially the question of our public roads. These roads were now used very much more than they used to be by motor cars and other machines, and the present width of the roads was a standing danger to the life of the public, and this was a matter of public urgency. (Hear, hear.) As regards habitual vagrants, he would have no hesitation in compelling these men to work. Fix the amount of work a man was to do and tell him he had to do it. If he would not do the work, he (the speaker) would do as a gentleman recommended yesterday and say, "Very well, then, you shan't eat." (Laughter, and hear, hear.) As to the children, he thought it was a standing disgrace that they should allow children to be hawked about the country by vicious men and women to gain public sympathy. That should be stopped at once. He would like a strong resolution from the Conference supporting that aspect of the question. (Hear, hear.) Further than that, he thought representatives of the various Boards of Guardians should impress upon the public the necessity of putting an end very largely to the tramp system by stopping indiscriminate charity. (Hear, hear.) He had found that when once they began to give money to a certain class of men they might take it for granted that they would pay them periodical visits; they came round just as the sun came round, one season after the other. (Laughter and applause.)

Mr J. DAVIDSON (Newcastle) congratulated Mr Adams upon his paper, which he thought was very concise and very workable. As to the questions discussed yesterday and to-day, he thought one had nothing to do with the other. Yesterday they were considering unemployed men, out of work through no fault of their own; to-day they were considering the tramp question. It was a question they had considered many times, and he did not know that they would ever be able to solve the difficulty. Tramps had always been with them, and he was afraid, unless there were very much more stringent methods of dealing with them, they would continue. In the Union he represented they had had a wonderful change, and he thought if they had one uniform system throughout the country that would be the most effectual in dealing with these men. The tramp or casual was not deserving as he saw him in the northern counties, and he thought he was the same all over the country. At Gateshead, on the other side of the water, they re-modelled the tramp wards. They were overrun with tramps, and they had to do something, and when they put the screw on a little, then the tramps came over to them at Newcastle. (Laughter.) The Newcastle Guardians visited Gateshead and adopted their plans, and with good results. They put up a new tramp ward. In 1902 they had 5,917 tramps pass through their wards, and when they took a leaf out of Gateshead's book, and had completed their work, last year they had 2,084 tramps. What was the system? There was no harshness in it. They were dealing with this class of people as they ought to deal with them. Under the system by which they accommodated them they had to clear

them out every day to make ready for the visitors they received the same night. Instead of keeping them two nights they could only keep them one night, as they had to make room for the others. At that time they had a yard where the tramps worked at stonebreaking or teasing oakum. They used to talk, and would not work; they were strangers to it. To a large extent they set the officers at defiance, with the result that they thought the sooner they got rid of them the better, only to receive perhaps worse. (Laughter.) The system now in vogue was a system which, if generally adopted, would perhaps be a better solution of the difficulty than anything else. That system was the cell system. (Hear, hear.) The man went into a cell—and a good cell it was, with a good bed, much better than he deserved. His work was done in another separate place. He did not mix with his companions to tell them what Workhouse to avoid and what Workhouse to go to. They kept him for two nights. These means had been very effectual in minimising the tramps to a very large extent, and if adopted throughout the country he thought it would prove a better solution of the tramp difficulty than anything else.

Mr BATEY: Do they get a bath both nights?

Mr DAVIDSON: No. Continuing, he said they sometimes looked upon the tramp as a loathsome, dirty man. Such was not the case. He was compelled to be clean. When he came to a house he did look a bit rough, but when stripped he had a clean body, because he was bathed at every Workhouse. With respect to children, he had every sympathy with the child, and he would not punish the child because of its parents; but to take children from tramps—why, that was just what they wanted. (Hear, hear.) To take the responsibility of children from these people was just what they wanted, and they would be more confirmed tramps than ever. What they wanted was a uniform system throughout the country, and if other Unions had not tried the system they had adopted in the north, the sooner they did so the better. (Applause.)

Miss KING asked if the Act of 1899 did not enable them to take children from tramps. The words were, "If people are unfit to bring up children." Surely that took in everything. She could not agree with the last speaker. She was afraid many tramps hired children in order to get sympathy.

Mrs CHALKER (Carlisle) said she always understood that the last Amendment Act enabled Guardians to adopt children of parents who once became chargeable to a Union, even if they were there only a single night, but it had become a dead letter in regard to tramps, because no Guardians were anxious to assume the responsibility for children who did not belong to their Union.

Mr H. JENNER-FUST (Local Government Board Inspector) said it was extremely satisfactory to hear from the Vice-Chairman of the Newcastle Board of Guardians what excellent results had followed the carrying out of the orders of the Local Government Board. As

regards uniformity, the expense had very much prevented uniformity throughout the country. Last September a meeting was held at Lancaster of the representatives of the Unions in the counties of Lancashire, Cheshire, Westmorland, and Cumberland, and they discussed the question of vagrancy, and came to the conclusion that vagrants could best be dealt with by a combination of Guardians extending over large areas, the expenses being shared equally over such areas. They thought that that plan would be much better than handing them over to the police. (Hear, hear.) Certainly there were considerable difficulties in their being managed by the police. They were accustomed to speak of the police as if they were a single body, managed not locally but imperially; but of course they knew that such was not the case, and how it was supposed—as the reader of the paper had pointed out—that greater uniformity could be obtained through two hundred bodies of police than through Boards of Guardians he did not know. Take the county of Lancashire. He believed there were twenty or more different police authorities in that county, and he did not see who was to bring these into line so as to obtain uniform administration. He thought difficulties would arise in the case of sick casuals, and that this was not an imaginary evil was shown by the fact that the West Derby Guardians had recently, when they erected a new tramp ward, built a new infirmary to deal with sick tramps. The Committee thought that women and children might be dealt with in the Workhouses. There was a difficulty in that, because tramp wards were often a good distance away from Workhouses. He did not see how the thing would work when men, women, and children were travelling together. (Hear, hear.) The question of the children was one which appealed to them all. He thought one great difficulty had been that no Guardians would take a child who was being dragged about the country, because, as Mrs Chalker had pointed out, the responsibility would fall upon them of children who did not belong to their Union. That difficulty could be got over if administration were extended over a large area, because it would then fall upon the area and not upon any individual Board. It seemed to him that in dealing with vagrants they must adopt the very ordinary practice of law, and throw the onus of proving they are not vagrants upon the vagrants themselves. The Committee suggest that those with three convictions as vagrants should be sent to a labour colony. Think for a moment of the difficulty attending the proving of convictions. They would have this power to send a man to a colony, on proving that he had on previous occasions been convicted. Where? At all events, it would entail one or more remands while evidence was being collected, and perhaps it would turn out that he never had been convicted, in which case he would have been detained in custody for some considerable time unnecessarily. It would be extremely easy for a man to prove that he was not leading a vagrant life, and if he had children in his care it would be quite easy for him to show that these children were not being dragged

about and given no education, but say the child was attending school, and the statement could be tested as to its truth or falsehood. It seemed to him that if they got the area of management extended over really large areas, the Guardians could deal with the subject perfectly well, particularly if they had labour colonies, with power of detention. When they took action on these lines it would help them in their administration. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT said they had one gentleman present whom they were delighted to see again, and that was Mr Moorsom. Last year when he was with them he notified that it would be his last visit as an official of the Local Government Board. They were very glad to have him there to-day as a guest. He was sure, with Mr Moorsom's experience, they would be very glad to have a few words from him. (Applause.)

Mr W. MOORSOM (retired Local Government Board Inspector) thanked the President for his kind words, and for welcoming him as their guest, free from the trammels of official life. (Laughter.) He thought he could say very little, because he had been for a long time out of England, but he had brought back from Switzerland and Italy a very strong conviction that these people had managed their social affairs in a better way than we were managing them. They did not seem to be plagued with that class of persons they were now discussing to anything like the prominent extent we are. He had been immensely struck by the good health and vigour of the children in Switzerland and Italy, the charming way in which they were taken about the lakes on the steamers, and the admirable behaviour of these children, which was rather different he was afraid from that of some of the English children to be met with in our streets and roads. He thought English people ought to go abroad and see the methods adopted by other nations. He was particularly pleased with the appearance of the working class in North Italy. He thought that about the Italian lakes and the city of Milan they had a very good way of dealing with these troublesome people, whom one hardly saw. It was very shocking on coming back to England and going to look at the cathedral or the beautiful abbey, and to be immediately jostled by a dirty, filthy tramp. (Laughter.) He called him a tramp because that word was favoured; if he was not a tramp he looked like one. One did not meet such people in Switzerland and North Italy to any great extent. He wished his countrymen would travel more and more. He was sure they had a great deal to learn from the Continent, and the Continent had something to learn from us, no doubt, but that was not the point. The poor there seemed to enjoy very much greater blessings than our poor do. He asked them to think of this, and let England become fully acquainted with the methods of other countries. (Hear, hear.) His belief was that the first immediate step to take was to enlarge their areas of administration which Mr Jenner-Fust had urged upon them for so many years. If they enlarged these to counties or groups of counties they would get rid

of a great deal of trouble. (Hear, hear.) He did not think the tramp question was of such great moment as it was thought to be. He was afraid vagrants or wanderers had been a characteristic of this country for many centuries. They would find if they went back in history the tramp seemed very prevalent in the early Middle Ages. He was afraid it was a characteristic of our tribe. We were wanderers ourselves; we wandered from our own country and came to this island because it was very promising, and we took it from the people who then had it. (A voice: "Give it them back again," and laughter.) This disposition still remained very strong. While he was an official he was a vagrant, continually travelling about from one place to another, and he found the pleasures of a change of scene very great. He quite sympathised with these people amongst us who lived by walking about from place to place. (Canon Walker: "At other people's expense." Laughter.) He did not think any change in the artificial laws would make any great change in the number of tramps. He thought it a very important thing that areas of administration should be enlarged, and he thought they were all unanimous about that. (Applause.)

Mr G. OLIVER (Tynemouth): What is a vagrant and what is a tramp?

The PRESIDENT thought that was a very difficult question to answer. He took it that there was no difference whatever. Continuing, he said they were very much indebted to Mr Adams for his excellent paper. He thought the disagreements with the Committee's Report raised by Mr Adams were disagreements with which everyone in this room would agree. To hand over the care of vagrants to the police, he thought, would be a huge mistake. (Hear, hear.) First of all they would have, as had already been pointed out, dual control over the tramp wards. These would belong to the Guardians, while they would have police management coming in. Wherever they had dual control they had friction and bad management. (Hear, hear.) To his mind the only satisfactory way of helping to solve this difficult problem was on the lines laid down by Mr Adams and emphasised by Mr Jenner-Fust and Mr Moorsom. Of course they understood that it would be quite impossible for small rural districts and urban districts to carry out the reforms suggested by the Local Government Board but not enforced by the Local Government Board, that was, to provide tramp wards. But by extended areas that could be done, and with those extended areas he would suggest that the Local Government Board's recommendation, instead of being a recommendation, should be a command. (Hear, hear.) In his opinion, if every Union adopted the separate cell system the tramp would lose one of the highest inducements to tramp about in the way he does. (Hear, hear.) He thought there was a good deal in what Mr Batey said about the connection between the paper read to-day and the paper read yesterday. Whether they liked it or not, there was a connection

between the two. He was very much struck a year or two ago by a very able paper upon the treatment of vagrants read at the Central Conference in London by a working man delegate, who gave an experience which very much struck him, because he afterwards learned from experience that it was an absolute reality. This delegate, in speaking of the want of work in his own town, said he went about from one town to another with the result that he was knocking about for several weeks, and before he got work he found that he had a real liking for a nomad existence, and it was only at last by a very powerful exercise of his will that he overcame that liking and eventually became once more a respectable working man. That was the actual experience of a man of very marked ability. He did think that if they had power by which they could say to a man who wanted work that they could give that man work it would to a very large extent solve this problem. He would go a step further. Unfortunately in this humane age they said that no man should starve. From one aspect that was very desirable, but from another aspect it was very undesirable. He believed that if a man would not work he ought to starve—(hear, hear)—because that man was not only no good to himself, but he was no good to society. (Hear, hear.) As pointed out by Mr Adams, that man should be detained, not for three years, but until such time as he gave ample proof that he was prepared to leave his lazy habits and become a respectable working man again. (Hear, hear.) The resolution which had been moved he was sure they would carry unanimously. Before putting it he thought it was only right that they should accord Mr Adams a very hearty vote of thanks for his valuable paper. It showed that Mr Adams must have given a great deal of attention and thought to it, and it had proved a delightful source of information to them that morning. He formally moved that they accord Mr Adams their very heartiest thanks for his paper.

The vote of thanks was heartily agreed to.

Mr BATEY's resolution was then put and carried unanimously.

Mr ADAMS returned thanks for the vote of thanks passed to him. Regarding the remark of the speaker as to the necessity of convincing the public of the wisdom of dealing more stringently with the habitual vagrant, it seemed to him that they were the very people to convince the public, and the passing of resolutions such as this would, in a very great measure, be the means of convincing the public in the right direction. The conclusions he happened to arrive at were the same as those of the Committee of the Poor Law Unions Association, and he was pleased to know that. What the results would be he did not know, but he hoped they would have some change. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT then referred to the respect and regard which they held for Mr Jenner-Fust, whom they were pleased to see so regularly at this Conference, and whose words and advice were always listened to with attention because they contained such good, sound ideas. He was sorry in some respects, and yet at the same time he

was glad, to learn that Mr Jenner-Fust had reached the time of his retirement, and he was sure they would allow him in their name to express the pleasure they always felt with his presence there as one of the Inspectors of this district. (Hear, hear.) They wished him every joy and happiness in his retirement, and they hoped, although he would very shortly cease to be an officer of the Local Government Board, that they would have him, like Mr Moorsom, with them as a visitor to this Conference. (Applause.) With the practical experience which Mr Jenner-Fust and Mr Moorsom had, it was an experience too valuable to be lost to a Conference like this, and he felt sure that as far as his arrangements would permit they hoped that they would have him as their guest at future Conferences. (Applause.) He wished Mr Jenner-Fust every health and happiness in his retirement, and he was sure they would all endorse that. (Applause.)

Rev. A. F. CURWEN (Harrington) seconded the motion. He had been associated with Mr Jenner-Fust for a great many years. Mr Jenner-Fust had been a visitor to the Board of Guardians and Workhouse at Whitehaven for the last twenty years. The valuable assistance which he always gave, and his kindness and willingness to assist, was perfectly well known to them all. He heartily endorsed what had been said, and congratulated Mr Jenner-Fust on his well-earned retirement.

The motion conveying the best wishes of the Conference to Mr Jenner-Fust was heartily endorsed.

Mr JENNER-FUST said he was extremely grateful to them for their expressions of kindly feeling. He had had the advantage that his district had formed part of two Poor Law Conferences—the Northern and North-Western—and he had been able, by their kind invitations, to attend the meetings of these Conferences, by which he had extended not only his experience, but also his circle of acquaintances, and, he hoped he might add, his circle of friends. (Applause.) Mr Moorsom was associated with him for many years, and they had always tried to do what they could to help Guardians in the work which they undertook. He was glad to say his relations with Boards of Guardians had been of an extremely pleasant character, and there had been no inclination whatever to take advantage of blunders into which he had fallen. He had always been given credit for doing his best in the work which he undertook. (Hear, hear.) In a few weeks' time he would be joining the ranks of the unemployed and be unemployable. (Laughter, and "No, no.") He could only hope that when the scale of his outdoor relief was settled it would be adequate. (Laughter.) He wished them all good-bye, for all his shortcomings he begged their forgiveness, for all their kindness he thanked them sincerely and cordially, and he wished the Northern Conference the greatest measure of success in the future years of usefulness which he was sure lay before it. (Applause.)

Canon WALKER said they should hardly separate without expressing regret that the Inspector from the northern part, Mr Lowery,

was not with them. (Hear, hear.) Mr Adams had told him that Mr Lowery had a pressing engagement in London, and they all regretted that he was not present. (Hear, hear.) It was always a pleasure to see the Local Government Board Inspectors and hear what they had to say. Before he sat down he would like, in the name of the Conference, to welcome one who was there for the first time, namely, Mr Elias, who was at present assistant to Mr Jenner-Fust. (Hear, hear.) He thought Mr Elias came to them from a very good apprenticeship, and they could only hope that he would walk in the footsteps and the example set before him, and that they would see him here with them, and that he would give them the same assistance and help as Mr Jenner-Fust had done. (Applause.) Canon Walker concluded by moving a vote of thanks to the President for so ably presiding over the Conference, and said how glad he was that Mr Affleck had withdrawn his intention of resigning as he threatened to do. (Applause.)

The vote of thanks was carried with acclamation.

The PRESIDENT replied, and added a word of welcome to Mr Elias, expressing regret that by an oversight he had omitted to do so previously. He hoped they would see Mr Elias at many Conferences, and he felt sure that, like his predecessors, he would always give them words of advice. The President concluded with a reference to the high tone of the Conference, and the high order of the papers and discussions, and expressed a hope that next year the Conference at beautiful Keswick would be as successful as this one had been.

The proceedings then terminated.

North Wales District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-SECOND ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE
FOR THE DISTRICT COMPRISING THE COUNTIES OF
ANGLESEY, CARNARVON, DENBIGH, FLINT, MERI-
ONETH, AND MONTGOMERY, HELD ON TUESDAY
AND WEDNESDAY, 4TH AND 5TH SEPTEMBER 1906,
AT THE GUILDHALL, CARNARVON.

President—Mr W. A. DARBISHIRE, J.P.,
Mayor of Carnarvon.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

ANGLESEY (2 Unions).	
ANGLESEY—	Jones, John.
Thomas, Hugh.	Jones, J. Edmund.
	Jones, O. Jeffrey.
	Jones, Richard.
HOLYHEAD—	Jones, Robert (Dinas).
Elias, Mrs O. H.	Jones, R. Ranleigh.
Hughes, James E. (Clerk).	Jones, Thomas.
	Jones, Thomas O.
	Jones, T. (Waenfawr).
	Jones, T. R.
	Jones, W. Edward.
	Jones, W. H.
	Lloyd, F. Longveville.
	Lloyd, T. J.
	Owen, Job.
	Owen, Robert.
	Parry, Henry (Glawrafon).
	Parry, R. Henry.
	Pritchard, E. R.
	Richards, A. H.
	Roberts, T. F.
	Roberts, William W.
	Roberts, William M.
	Thomas, J. G.
	Thomas, Robert.
CARNARVON (4 Unions).	
BANGOR AND BRAUMARIS—	
Thomas, Hugh (Chairman).	
Davies, Joseph.	
Hughes, Robert.	
Saunders, Mrs A. M.	
Evans, R. Benjamin (Clerk).	
CARNARVON—	
Williams, Humphrey (Chairman).	
Eames, Owen.	
Griffiths, T. H.	
Griffiths, Robert.	
Hughes, J. R.	
Hughes, Rees.	
Jones, Charles A.	

Williams, A. W. S.
 Williams, Griffith (Fron Chwith).
 Williams, Hugh.
 Williams, John.
 Williams, John E.
 Williams, Capt. Jones.
 Williams, J. C. Lloyd.
 Williams, R. C.
 Williams, R. J.
 Thomas, J. Henry (Clerk).
 Williams, John (Clerk's Assistant).
 Griffith, G. R. (Medical Officer).
 Hughes, William (Medical Officer).
 Owen, Robert (Medical Officer).
 Roberts, F. (Medical Officer).
 Williams, E. G. (Medical Officer).
 Williams, W. H. (Medical Officer).
 Williams, W. L. (Medical Officer).
 Hughes, R. (Relieving Officer).
 Jones, G. G. (Relieving Officer).
 Jones, J. R. (Relieving Officer).
 Jones, T. G. (Relieving Officer).
 Parry, John (Relieving Officer).

CONWAY—

Raynes, J. W. (Chairman).
 Abram, Thomas.
 Champneys, Miss Edith.
 Owen, Hugh.
 Parry, T. E. (Clerk).

PWLLELI—

Jones, John T. (Chairman).
 Roberts, J. F.
 Pritchard, Hugh (Clerk).

DENBIGHSHIRE (3 Unions).

LLANRWST—

Owen, R. R. (Clerk).

RUTHIN—

Jones, Robert.
 Jones, William.

WREXHAM—

Jones, Simon (Chairman).
 Kyffin, Morris.
 Rowland, Mrs.

FLINTSHIRE (3 Unions).

ST ASAPH—

Jones, Miss Owen.
 Jones, T. C.
 Williams, J. P.
 Grimsley, Charles (Clerk).

HAWARDEN—

Thom, Miss.
 Williams, Ralph.
 Wright, John.

HOLYWELL—

Prince, James (Chairman).
 Batters, Mrs K. E.
 Petrie, John.
 Peters, Edward.
 Roberts, P. Harding (Clerk).
 Roberts, W. H. (Assistant Clerk).

MERIONETHSHIRE (4 Unions).

BALA—

Jones, J. P. (Relieving Officer).

CORWEN—

Nanson, Joseph (Chairman).

DOLGELLY—

Owen, Hugh.

FESTINIOG—

Jones, William.
 Roberts, Thomas (Clerk).

MONTGOMERYSHIRE (4 Unions).

LLANFYLLIN—

Roberts, W. R.

VISITORS.

Miss B. Walton Evans, Local Government Board Inspector.
 Mrs Walton Evans.
 Mrs Darbshire, Mayoress of Carnarvon.
 Mrs Simon Jones, Wrexham.
 Mrs A. Williams, Carnarvon.
 Mrs E. Peters, Leeswood, Mold.
 Mrs Wright, Hawarden.
 Miss Alice M'M. Jones, Carnarvon.

Miss Annie C. Thomas, Beaumaris.
 W. A. Darbshire, J.P., Mayor of Carnarvon.
 R. O. Roberts, Town Clerk, Carnarvon.
 J. Menzies, Carnarvon.
 Rev. A. R. Alsop, Cannock Union.
 O. H. Elias, Holyhead.
 John Griffiths, Surveyor, Carnarvon.
 Rowland Williams, Buckley.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

MONTGOMERYSHIRE—Forden, Machynlleth, and Newtown and Llanidloes.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
OUTDOOR RELIEF (including Medical Attendance). By the Rev. ARTHUR R. ALSOP, M.A., <i>Guardian, Cannock Union</i> -	195
THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES, including the Question of Rescue Work. By Miss EDITH CHAMPNEYS, <i>Guardian, Conway Union</i> - - -	212
MAINTENANCE OF PARENTS BY THEIR CHILDREN. By Mr CHARLES A. JONES, <i>Guardian, Carnarvon Union</i> -	230

TUESDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER.

THE delegates were entertained at the Royal Hotel, Carnarvon, to luncheon, provided by the members and officers of the Carnarvon Board of Guardians. Mr Humphrey Williams, Chairman of the Board, presided, supported by the Mayor of Carnarvon (Mr W. A. Darbshire, J.P.), the Town Clerk (Mr R. O. Roberts), Miss B. Walton Evans (Local Government Board Inspector), &c.

THE CHAIRMAN, in submitting the toast of "The King," which was cordially honoured, said the King is beloved by all his subjects, from the highest to the lowest, the richest to the poorest in the land. As Guardians, those present had to do with the least fortunate of His Majesty's subjects, and they knew that the poor had no greater or truer friend than the King. Whatever had been done in Wales or in England to alleviate the sufferings or the sorrows of the people, His Majesty, the Queen, and the other members of the Royal Family have ever been to the front with their assistance. (Cheers.)

MR JOB OWEN (ex-Chairman of the Carnarvon Board) proposed the toast of "Success to the Conference," and observed that he had become a strong believer in Poor Law Conferences. Such gatherings afforded not only opportunities for social intercourse, but what was of greater importance, they provided means whereby Boards of Guardians could be associated together to support, with immeasurable force, any approved measures. A well-managed Conference such as theirs could emphasise proposals in regard to Poor Law matters with great public advantage, and in a way that was impossible for a single Board of Guardians to do. The subjects on the agenda for discussion were timely and important, and would provide matter for future meditation. He trusted that the suggestions thrown out in the course of the proceedings would be utilised by the various Boards of Guardians in the district.

MR RICHARD JONES (Carnarvon) supported the toast, which was duly drunk.

MR SIMON JONES (Chairman, Wrexham) proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Carnarvon Guardians and their officers for the hospitality extended to the delegates.

MR JAS. PRINCE (Chairman of the Holywell Board) seconded

and congratulated Carnarvon upon the possibility of its becoming in the near future a royal town.

The vote of thanks having been carried with acclamation, the Chairman formally acknowledged the compliment.

The Conference was held at the Guildhall, the President, Mr W. A. Darbishire, J.P., Mayor of Carnarvon, in the chair.

The PRESIDENT, in opening the proceedings, said that from a large and varied experience extending over many years, he had happily become accustomed to appearing in positions for which he was not in the least fitted. He hoped they would excuse any deficiencies, but they must all understand that Carnarvon made them heartily welcome. Carnarvon made everybody coming from a distance welcome, but assembled as they were with the object of enlightening not only the people of North Wales, but also the whole British nation, by the results of their Conference, they need not wonder that he, on behalf of the city, made the delegates especially welcome that day. (Applause.)

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell), the Hon. Secretary, read a letter from Mrs Griffith-Boscawen acknowledging the expression of sympathy passed at the last Conference with herself and family in the loss of her husband, Captain Griffith-Boscawen.

Letters regretting inability to attend were also announced from Mr Hugh R. Williams, Local Government Board Inspector; Sir William Chance, Bart.; Mr Owen Jones, Blaenau Festiniog; Mr H. Rees, Corwen; Mr R. O. Williams, Garn Dolbenmaen; Col. S. Parr-Lynes, Garthmeilio, Corwen; Mr John Evans, Corwen; Miss White, Holywell; Miss Evans, Flint; Mr T. Edwards, Llanffyllin; Mr Howarth, Llanffyllin; Mr R. Gillart, Machynlleth; Mrs Herbert Lewis, London; Mr William Roberts, Mostyn; Mr Wm. C. Pickering, Mostyn; Mr J. L. Muspratt, Holywell; Mrs S. Jones, Mold; Miss M. M. E. Hughes, Flint, and others.

The Hon. SECRETARY also read acknowledgments from the education authorities in North Wales of the appeal sent out from the last Conference, urging such authorities to assist in the decrease of pauperism by fostering in the minds of school children habits of frugality and economy. The Merioneth authority stated that the subject of thrift was already one of the subjects taught in the schools under their charge. The Secretary added that he did not know if any further progress had been made with the matter, but he had observed that in the newspapers it was stated that where school banks had been established they had proved a great success. Apparently the only education authority taking up the subject of thrift for teaching purposes was that of Merioneth.

The PRESIDENT then briefly addressed the Conference, and said that he did not feel equal to the occasion, because he had had nothing to do with Poor Law administration since the year 1860, when the Cotton Famine took place. Then many thousands of workmen, who might reasonably have been supposed to have been able to

survive times of ordinary distress, were thrown helplessly upon the relief administered to them in a public fashion. The Poor Law broke down absolutely, and was no use at all. They then had to stand by each other, and those who had gave to those who had not. To his mind the Poor Law was then a failure, and did more harm than good. Shortly afterwards he settled in North Wales, but he had never interfered with Poor Law administration in any way whatever. He was quite certain that in his own way he had done as much good as two or three Boards of Guardians. He attended the Conference in an attitude of curiosity in order to see what powers Poor Law administrators possessed, their methods and aims, and what is the organisation for the relief of undeserved distress under the new and changing conditions of industry and labour, the collection of money in a few hands, and other striking features of modern society. After all, that was what the Poor Law was meant to do, and he would listen with the greatest interest to what was said. (Applause.)

Rev. ARTHUR R. ALSOP then read the following paper :—

OUTDOOR RELIEF

(INCLUDING MEDICAL ATTENDANCE).

By REV. ARTHUR R. ALSOP, M.A.

(*Guardian, Cannock Union*).

I HAVE been asked to read a paper on the above subject, and I may honestly say I consented with reluctance to endeavour to do so. The question of *Outdoor Relief* (its functions and limitations, its importance to the recipient and the ratepayer) is indeed a very serious and difficult one to endeavour to deal with. Independently of one's experience as a Guardian of any particular Union, the more that one tries to read what has been said and written on the subject, the more complex does it seem to be, and the harder to try and collate the past thoughts and efforts of those who from time to time have left, for the benefit of others, the record of their strenuous endeavour to grapple with a subject that ranks with that of vagrancy, as one of the greatest difficulties of Poor

Law Administration. "So many men—and so many women—so many minds." Blue-books (not blue stockings but!), lady Guardians, and male Guardians have explained evils, discussed causes, and offered remedies and panaceas. Still the question looms almost, if not quite as much as formerly in magnitude. Compared however with that of vagrancy, it may possibly be one easier to be dealt with.

I. We know, of course, that we are under the guidance and authority of the Local Government Board; but some would hold that our whole administration should be so guided by that body that there should be absolute uniformity, and a hard and fast rule on all these debatable questions. This in itself is a debatable question. In one way, it is a great benefit to those who are elected to wield a minor authority, to have their course of action so mapped out by a higher authority that they can only act like wound-up watches. There is something of this sort in work-house dietary and other matters. Yet, again, this may dwarf and weaken the *personality*, the *individuality*, the real earnest desire of the several male or female Guardians to try and express, in his or her idea, and ideal, their own real and strong desire to endeavour to do something to benefit humanity, and to grapple with these great social questions that surround us on all sides. "A little bit of string, such a tiny little thing"—its name is sometimes called Red Tape—is all important in a sense, and a right sense; but it may, sometimes, not only bind up things in order, as it should do, but "crib, cabin, and confine" thoughts and projects and plans that would, without it, have worked together for good. A kind of parallel might be drawn as regards the old political economy problem of the *Nationalisation of the Railways*. No doubt it would be good in many ways. In our country, so far, it has not been adopted. The result is the service is excellent [with very few exceptions!]. There is a friendly rivalry

—hardly any accidents—and each company tries to do its best for its passengers and its shareholders. So should it be with Boards of Guardians, each having its own management and, shall we say, excellent service [with very few exceptions!], a friendly rivalry, and each trying to do its best for its recipients of relief, and for its (converse of shareholders) rate-payers. And so, whilst the powers that be still allow us our individuality, we come to this our voluntary gathering of various Boards to discuss and advise on several questions, the first on the agenda being that of *Outdoor Relief and Medical Attendance*. But may I make one incidental remark? I notice that the Wigton Board of Guardians recently refused to send delegates to the Northern Counties Poor Law Conference at Keswick on 10th and 11th July. The Vice-Chairman said they never got any good from the Conferences. The Clerk declared that the motion was “seconded all round.” This represents the feeling of some Boards, and the feeling of perhaps a few members of those Boards who send delegates; but I may venture to say, that from some experience of Conferences (though I have not addressed one before), I have thought these gatherings to be *helpful, useful, practical*.

II. We find in the Report of the Commissioners of 1834 the following recommendation:—“*That except as to medical attendance, &c., all relief whatever to able-bodied persons, or to their families, otherwise than in well-regulated Workhouses, shall be declared unlawful.*” Here we have a strong expression of opinion against outdoor relief generally, but still it has been continued to be given from that date till now, and what we have to ask ourselves is, what is its present position? how are we to meet the question as Guardians in a great position of trust? what class of persons relief should be given to, and the manner and method in which Guardians should deal with applications for relief; the

standing of their officer or agent, and the *modus operandi* adopted by the officer?

It must be self-evident that a body often consisting of thirty or forty members cannot of itself have all information or particulars of cases dealing with them, though in the case of country Unions I would contend that it is the duty of every Guardian to make himself acquainted, as far as he is able, with the particulars of any application for outdoor relief previous to its coming before the consideration of the Board. A hint from the relieving officer as to a possible application need be all that is required from a conscientious Guardian, even if he were not already acquainted with the case. But whether in town or country, the Board must greatly rely on their relieving officer, who acts as their eye and ear for the time being, they must do their very best to get a good and reliable man; he should have a sufficient—neither cheese-pared nor extravagant—salary; he should be *worked with, looked after* in a sense, by taking an interest in him and his work, and *then, "thoroughly trusted."*

The Board (and this is the ideal Board!) would consider the following cases of destitution as worthy of favourable consideration for relief, viz. :—

1. Persons rendered by old age and infirmity unable to earn a livelihood.

2. Persons (and their families) prevented by reason of physical disability, or by mental affliction, from earning a subsistence.

3. Widows, with more than one child, and no illegitimate child born during widowhood, who may be able to gain an independent subsistence.

4. Children being separate from parents, or orphans.

5. Persons (and their families) who by reason of accident or sickness are temporarily prevented from gaining a livelihood.

6. Persons requiring relief by reason of accident or sickness of any member of his or her family.

7. The destitute wife or child of any able-bodied man who shall be in the service of His Majesty as a soldier, sailor, or marine.

And the amount of relief in our ideal Board would be absolutely fitted to the merits of the case, and yet trying at the same time not to forget the continually overstrained pocket of the more than overstrained ratepayer.

Nos. 1 and 2 are both difficult matters for consideration.

1. *Persons Rendered by Old Age and Infirmary Unable to Earn a Living.*—Putting aside the question of "Old Age Pensions," it always seems a very hard thing that the man who has led a careful and thrifty life and has saved a little money, but not enough to keep himself (and to keep, perhaps, a wife hardworking and respectable as himself), should be obliged to spend his hard-earned savings—which perhaps are sometimes much less than they should be, owing to the failure of some badly managed benefit society—before he can ask for relief. A "grant in aid" from the Guardians and perhaps some supplementary help from a charitable source, might be the very thing to reward thrift, to eke out his own savings, and, in the long run, save the pocket of the ratepayers. On the other hand, inability to earn a livelihood arising, even in age and infirmity, through drunkenness and loose living, should prevent the applicant, except under special circumstances, from receiving outdoor relief.

No. 2 is also difficult. *Persons (and their Families) Prevented by Physical Disability or by Mental Affliction from Earning a Subsistence.*—Cases, perhaps, of the father of a young family who himself has got consumption or cancer. Naturally there is something more to be done than giving merely so much outdoor relief. There should be an endeavour to send the sufferer to a suitable home or cure. Boards of Guardians now often rightly subscribe to well-managed institutions.

There should be also the possible enlistment of charitable agencies. The same applies to those sad mental or epileptic cases which verge upon but do not actually reach insanity.

As regards Nos. 5 and 6, *when accident or sickness requires temporary relief*, Guardians should be allowed discretion to relieve on loan, with fullest powers to recover, without pauperising the recipient.

III. Guardians should see that when cases are brought before them the fullest possible information should be provided as to the applicant's previous history, position, wages, family, relatives, both his and his wife's parents, &c., and all particulars should be entered in various columns in the R.O. Application and Report Book. Sometimes relieving officers rely on their memories or enter but scanty particulars in their books. This should not be allowed; there should be a full history written down and kept for reference. As far as possible every applicant on a fresh application should appear personally before the Board. Guardians should visit cases when they can occasionally. Every half-year the Board should have a call-over of the poor persons they relieve, different Committees of the Board should visit different parts of the Union, and every person, unless bedridden, should come before them. The relieving officer should visit each case once in eight weeks, certainly in twelve, and if he has tact may often do much in many ways by which the pockets of the ratepayers may be saved, *e.g.*, in making parents and grown-up families realise their several responsibilities and occasionally patching up those family quarrels which sometimes are an indirect cause of application for relief. Some "Suggestions for Sound Poor Law Administration," which were circulated by Sir William Chance at the West Midland Conference at Malvern this year, I venture to reproduce.

"1. Have a fixed policy of relief and stick to it.

"2. Let there be an adequate staff of relieving officers, and be particular as to whom you appoint to the post.

"3. Insist on the fullest information being given about every applicant for relief; and until you have got this information do not come to any definite decision on the case. The 'case paper' system is a great help to this end.

"4. Back up your relieving officers in their inquiry work by all means in your power.

"5. Having got all the information about the case, make the relief sufficient to relieve its necessities, and do not lose sight of it.

"6. As a corollary to 5, insist on the frequent and regular visiting of the cases assisted.

"7. Work in close co-operation with charitable agencies.

"*Finally.* Read the Annual Reports of the Local Government Board's Inspectors for your district; you will find them most instructive and full of valuable hints for improved relief administration."

IV. With respect to *medical attendance*, as the matter now stands, if a man falls ill, being out of work, in no club, not absolutely destitute but unable to pay for a private doctor, he obtains an order from the relieving officer for the services of the parish doctor. The latter attends, and if the sick person is suffering from a disease that he thinks can be benefited by nourishment, the doctor *recommends* (he has no power to *order*) a nourishing diet, which the relieving officer supplies. If medicine is thought necessary, the doctor provides that at his own cost. He sends in a sheet, in lieu of the District Medical Report Book, carefully filled in for each Board meeting, which sheet is a *résumé* of his attendances, medicine, &c., supplied. This seems to be a good system as far as it goes, but in our ideal Board I would urge that the doctor should have more power and discretion, especially as it is

generally held that medical relief does not disfranchise. As we have the spending of other people's money, if we wish to be lavish, let our weakness show itself with respect to the medical officer. In a sense, he has immense power, and at the same time he is hemmed in, and in a way belittled. He has no power, for example, to compel an authority to be given to him to attend upon a person. He can attend without authority and report; but then the relieving officer may ignore his report. He has no power to compel Guardians to give an order for medical relief. That relief is frequently given to temporarily disabled cases, and these cases are, as a rule, on the border-line of pauperism, and medical attendance may be the thin end of the wedge. The doctor, with more latitude allowed him, might attend a case without bringing the recipient into contact with the more strict officialdom of the Poor Law, a too intimate acquaintance with the channels through which relief is given. A poor person should be in the position to go to the parish doctor without recourse, in the first instance, to the relieving officer or the Overseer. He must, of course, be thoroughly trustworthy, and his salary should be such as to include payment for extra cases, like midwifery or operations for treatment of fractures, &c.

In an able paper read before this Conference in 1900 by Miss Annie Roberts, she said "medical attention to the sick poor was capable of being materially improved. They (the medical officers) were allowed to linger indefinitely." I can myself hardly see any reason for their wishing to linger over a case. They are paid a yearly salary, and would, one might imagine, wish to see a case "ended or mended" as soon as possible. In one of the most populous parts of my Union, the medical officer of that district tells me that in 1905 he received 350 notes from the relieving officer to visit paupers in their own homes. Eight visits on an average made the total 2,800. That the

bottles of medicine per annum numbered over 1,000, and that the number of paupers attending at the surgery were about 800 in the year. He would not probably desire to have cases too long on his hands.

V. Considering the subject as a whole, statistics are indeed dry things, and also are said to prove anything. I will therefore trouble you with only a very few, and take them roughly and generally just by way of comparison as regards the question of expenditure by Guardians. In 1903 we find expended on *in maintenance*, roughly £1,900,000; 1904, £2,000,000. *Out-relief*, 1903, £2,676,000; 1904, £2,734,000—a very slight increase—while *salaries of Union officers and servants* reckon up from £1,465,000 (1903) to £1,533,000 in the year 1904. It will be noticed that all the items are on the increase—I suppose almost necessarily so—that outdoor relief is the greatest call on the poor ratepayer's pocket, but that the salaries, which do not really affect our question of to-day, come to an enormous sum. In a sense it may be necessary to spend that sum for efficiency, but it is a very serious matter. Again, in 1902, we find roughly 11,700 male able-bodied paupers; in 1905, 22,300—nearly double (this seems a terrible state of things), the females go up from 49,000 to 59,000 (not quite so bad), and the children under sixteen of able-bodied parents rise from 132,000 to 159,000. The not able-bodied figures are—males, 78,000 to 85,000; females, 204,000 to 214,000. [Here we note not so much the increase, but the tremendous total.] Children under sixteen, 27,000 to 29,000. *Insane*—males, 36,000 to 40,000; females, 44,000 to 47,000; children under sixteen, 700 to 800. Net total of persons relieved—in *Workhouse*, 1902, 240,000; 1905, 273,000. Outside Workhouse, 825,000; 1905, 932,000. The increase seems more than it should be.

Again, in 1871, we find the amount raised for poor rates was 8½ millions, 1s. 6d. in the £. Population,

22½ millions ; rate per head, 7s. Price of wheat, 49s. 8½d. In 1904, amount raised, 12½ millions, 1s. 4d. in the £. Population over 33½ millions, rate per head, 8s. 0¼d., and price of wheat, 27s. 4d. Taking these figures, marking of course the increase of population, we notice that the actual amount of poor rate in the £ is less, but the rate per head is 1s. more, while the price of wheat has gone down 22s. a quarter, and so the cost of living ought to be less. These figures *might* show (I only say *might*) greater improvidence generally among the poor, and greater (I won't say extravagance but) expenditure by Poor Law authorities.

VI. Guardians owe their existence, as we know, to abuses of power, and possess their authority under the 1834 Act. In the list of nine who composed the Commission of that date, all seem to have been real business men (not ornamental ones). Bishop Blomfield of London, famed for his practical sagacity ; Messrs Sturges Bourne, Edwin Chadwick, &c., all as far as we believe, good men and true, and we find them denouncing in no uncertain lines, mal-administration, and suggesting measures for the moment, rather negative than positive, trying more to throw away obstructing stones than to provide definite stepping stones, and to endeavour to open a broader path to those who should come after them. They said, amongst other things, "we are perfectly aware that for the right diffusion of right principles and habits, we are to look, not so much to any economic arrangements and regulations as to the influence of a moral and religious education. One great advantage of any measure which shall remove or diminish the evils of the present system is, that it will in the same degree remove the obstacles which now impede the progress of instruction, and intercept its results ; and will afford a freer scope to the operation of every instrument which may be employed for elevating the intellectual and moral condition of the poorer classes.

We believe that if the funds now destined to the purposes of education, many of which are applied in a manner unsuited to the present wants of society, were wisely and economically employed, they would be sufficient to give all the assistance that can be prudently afforded by the State. . . .

“As soon as a good administration of the Poor Law shall have rendered further improvement possible, we are convinced that *the most important duty of the Legislature is to take measures to promote the religious and moral education of the labouring classes.*”

Seventy-two years have passed since these words were penned—more than two generations. The wish of the Commissioners, as regards education, has been carried out in more senses than they could possibly have imagined! and yet we have, shall I say, as great problems of poverty facing us still.

It is, however, a thing to be deeply thankful for, that whatever our political or religious views, we, as Guardians of the poor, and, may I say also, of the rates, have one great and continuous common aim and object, the sincere desire to endeavour to carry out, to the best of our ability, the trust committed to our charge, and to try and make the efforts of those who come after us, in some way, easier by *our* efforts.

“Say not the struggle naught availeth,
The labour and the wounds are vain;
The enemy faints not nor faileth,
And as things have been they remain.

If hopes were dupes, fears may be liars;
It may be in yon smoke concealed,
Your comrades chase e'en now the fliers,
And, but for you, possess the field.

For not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly,
But westward, look, the land is bright.”

DISCUSSION.

Mr JAMES PRINCE (Holywell) expressed the indebtedness of the Conference to Mr Alsop for his paper, which dealt with a most important subject. Indeed, the outdoor relief was the most important and difficult question with which Boards of Guardians had to deal, for the administration of outdoor relief was perhaps more liable to abuse than any other branch of the Poor Law. It was a good thing that to some extent there was control by the Local Government Board, and Guardians were better off under that control than if they were allowed to have entirely their own way. He was not sure that the comparison of railway companies and shareholders with Boards of Guardians and ratepayers would hold good, nor did he think it would be well for Boards of Guardians to vie with each other as to which should grant the most privileges to the poor. Uniformity of treatment, even in outdoor relief, would be preferable to Boards of Guardians each dealing with cases in their own way. If Boards of Guardians dealt leniently with outdoor pauperism, instead of a decrease in pauperism there would be a material increase. In fact, he believed that the increase in outdoor relief had been the cause of creating pauperism. He agreed with the suggestions thrown out by Sir William Chance that Guardians should have fixed principles of relief and stick to them. Certainly he endorsed Mr Alsop's remarks with regard to the relieving officer. They should get a good relieving officer, and then trust him; he was not sure that they did this as strictly as they ought. Guardians sometimes hampered the work of the relieving officer, and it would be better if relieving officers had more backbone, and were determined to carry out their duties irrespective of any influence that might be brought to bear upon them by individual Guardians in particular cases. But he was not at one with Mr Alsop in regard to the medical officer. They must remember that medical officers had their own private work, and would sometimes wish to gain popularity. His experience was that medical officers were careful not to do anything for nothing, and would not attend a woman in confinement unless they received an order from the relieving officer. But to allow them to make an order without consulting the relieving officer would be altogether wrong. In Holywell the relieving officers were instructed not to give anything ordered by a medical officer without first examining the case to see if it were really deserving or not.

Mrs ELIAS (Holyhead) said she was glad to have listened to Mr Alsop's able paper, but he had misconstrued what she had said in the paper written by her and referred to by Mr Alsop, with regard to medical officers lingering. She had meant to convey that they kept the patients lingering in illness. A medical officer had to do a great deal for his money, and did not look upon his Poor Law cases individually. He looked upon them as a group, and if he devoted more time and attention to the sick poor the paupers would get well sooner. Medical officers already had sufficient powers, and

these should not be increased. So many people went to the medical officer for medicine or consultation that he would be at a loss in giving orders, and it would not be right to him, and certainly not fair to the ratepayers. If he knew that a patient could afford to pay him, it would not be right for him to treat him or order nourishment without consulting the Guardians. As it was, there were many things that should be remedied, and certainly Guardians should insist on more attention to the patients, so that they could be got well quickly.

Mr CHARLES A. JONES (Carnarvon), referring to the election of relieving officers, said that Mr Alsop suggested that a great deal of reliance should be placed in the relieving officer, but that statement should be modified. The question rather was, Where was the relieving officer to be obtained to be relied upon? In Carnarvon they had relieving officers who were competent and reliable, and a better system of election than that adopted in that Union could not be found. He had always found the Carnarvon relieving officers' ability beyond question, and that their recommendations were to be absolutely relied upon. They had certain rules by which these officers were elected, but in his time he had seen men elected who were quite incompetent to discharge their duties. Relieving officers should have an understanding of human nature, and be able to give the Guardians a clear and concise statement as to each application made. The Carnarvon Guardians did not elect the officers haphazard, but held an examination, both written and *viva voce*. If this system were adopted they would be able to select men who would be a credit to the Union, and he would like to see some such system adopted generally. No one in Carnarvon was selected on account of family or personal connections, and the stiff examination through which candidates had to pass, both in general scholarship and matters appertaining to Poor Law administration, ensured the securing of the men best fitted for the post, men who would not only uphold the dignity and welfare of the Board, but also help to keep down the rates.

Mr HUGH THOMAS (Chairman, Bangor and Beaumaris) explained that many things in the paper were carried out by his Board, but while he agreed that there should be full information as to applications, he did not quite see that it should be so extended as indicated by Mr Alsop in paragraph 3. Neither did he think it possible or practicable for a committee of the Board to visit each pauper every six months. As to the medical officer, he agreed with Mr Prince that too much power should not be given to that officer. To permit the medical officer to grant nourishment as well as medical assistance would be wrong. The statistics given as to pauperism did not apply to Bangor and Beaumaris, where pauperism had decreased one-third, and outdoor relief had also decreased, but not quite to the same extent, in the last fifteen years. They had a vigilance committee which did excellent work, as shown by steady decline in pauperism. He entirely agreed with the views of Mr C. A. Jones, and believed that if his system were adopted it would be to their future benefit.

Mr HENRY PARRY (Carnarvon) agreed with what Mr C. A. Jones had said with reference to the officials. However, he would be against taking anything away from the medical officers. If they could not trust their medical officers they ought to do away with them. (Applause.) In the Carnarvon Union they had every confidence in their officials, from the medical officers to the relieving officers. The Guardians trusted them absolutely, and other Boards might follow the example set by the Carnarvon Union. Reference had been made by Mr Alsop to strikes, but they as Guardians had nothing to do with strikes. That was a matter for the employer and employed. But where there was poverty and want the Guardians must give relief. What else could they do? He was sure that they did not do anything different in any other part of the country.

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell) pointed out that the object of the discussion was not to uphold or condemn either relieving officers or medical officers. The paper did not seek to cast reflection upon the way any officers discharged their duties, but Mr Alsop advised Guardians to be careful in their selection, and with that advice he agreed heartily. Medical relief was the thin end of the wedge in getting general relief, and therefore they should not make the getting of medical relief too easy, because that was the first step towards placing a pauper upon the permanent list. As to extending the powers of medical officers, the Legislature and the Orders of the Local Government Board had been very wise in stating that the medical officer only had power to recommend. From difficulties experienced in Holywell he could support the observations made. The danger was that if medical relief was given with too great ease, they would have the numbers increasing on their books, and if that were the case, then they could not have that happy state which seemed to exist in Carnarvon, where everything was done so perfectly. He agreed with the suggestion made by Sir William Chance that there should be an adequate staff of relieving officers. In this respect Poor Law administration in North Wales was weak. They had not sufficient relieving officers, they had too many cases to deal with them efficiently. It would be better to have more relieving officers and more districts. With every assurance he could say that it would pay Boards of Guardians to have a sufficient staff of relieving officers. If the cases were limited more attention could be paid to each case. How could one man look after 300 or 400 cases spread over fourteen or fifteen miles and go to the pay-station himself? How could he, under such circumstances, discharge his duties with satisfaction to himself? It had been proved that it was economical to the Union and advantageous to the recipients for the relieving officer to have a limited number of cases. They really wanted as few cases as possible, but those cases should be dealt with generously. He would prefer to give four applicants 5s. each than he would give ten applicants 2s. each. They should first of all satisfy themselves as to the reasonableness of the destitution and the justice of the case, and deal fairly with it. He had read somewhere that people seemed to think they

had a right to demand relief, and had lost self-respect. He could remember the time when any one in receipt of relief was looked down upon with some degree of abhorrence, but he was not sure that that feeling prevails to-day. Their duty was to try and uplift the people in this respect. He pointed out that some distinction must naturally be made between those persons who had made some provision for old age, though perhaps they were not able to save enough to keep them all through life when past work, and those persons who were utterly indifferent as to their future and were thriftless and careless. He had known cases showing how the too generous treatment of the improvident reacted upon the provident. Two men were working in the same works. One belonged to a friendly society and the other did not. The former fell sick, but his pride would not allow him to accept parish relief, so the family managed on the allowance from the society. But the improvident man applied for relief the moment his labour failed, and the measure of relief given to him was greater than what was obtained by the man who had endeavoured to provide for himself. When the two men met, the latter told the other he was a fool to make provision, because he would have been better off if he had not been provident through his own efforts. This illustration showed the need for Guardians to be careful in order not to encourage, even indirectly, the thriftlessness which is gaining ground in the country. Their aim should be to first satisfy themselves that there is destitution, and then deal with the case in such a way that those who had endeavoured to be provident should not be at a disadvantage as compared with the improvident and careless. Reference had also been made in the paper to the red tape of the Local Government Board; he was sure that the Local Government Board was a protection to Guardians, and the red tape was sometimes a useful check. There had been evidence of this in cases which had come before the public. Reference had also been made to the cost of maintenance and to the cost of salaries, and they should bear in mind in this connection that the ratepayer's pocket was not affected by these items of expenditure in quite the same way. One disbursement came directly out of the rates and the other came out of the Imperial Exchequer.

Mr SIMON JONES (Wrexham) pointed out that the Conference would give an opportunity of bringing the President into sympathy with the work of the Guardians, and he could not help believing that he would come over to their general way of thinking in many matters of administration of Poor Law relief. On one point particularly he would like to hear the opinion of the President, viz., the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act and its effect upon outdoor relief. In the large industrial district of Wrexham it was found that many aged persons, formerly quite acceptable as workmen, their day's labour being quite satisfactory, had, under the operation of this Act, been thrown out of employment. Employers preferred younger men, who presumably were not so liable to accident. Those who had thus been thrown out of work now looked to Guardians for

relief. No doubt the Act was good enough as far as it went ; it assisted disabled soldiers in the industrial army, and enabled workers to be restored to health and strength, but there arose the question of the margin, and the older people who, while before were considered fit to work, were now held to be unfit for hard work. This question was worthy of consideration, and really came within the scope of the question under discussion, because such workmen and their families must be provided for, and not allowed to starve. Guardians were face to face with the fact that this class became destitute and required help. What was to be done with them? He was not prepared to suggest a remedy, but thought that in any amendment of the Act the matter should be considered. Anyhow, there was ample scope for discussion and exchange of opinion in regard to it.

Mr THOMAS JONES (Carnarvon Union) said that the Guardians of the Carnarvon Union had every reason to be proud of their officials—(hear, hear)—in whom they had every confidence. They were the best men they could find ; and if other Unions appointed the best men, irrespective of party or creed, there would soon be a change for the better in the administration of the Poor Law. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT, in reply, said that after experience of the Workmen's Compensation Act he had never seen any use of that Act in any way whatever. It was quite unnecessary, and the limitations it contained were not worthy of an Act of Parliament. For instance, the limitation that no compensation could be given for a fortnight was absolutely silly. In the case of himself and his partners, they had always had an Act of their own. If a man was seriously hurt he was kept until he was well. The ratepapers paid nothing for that. If it were a *bonâ fide* accident, and could not have been prevented by any care of his own, the man never suffered as far as it could be made up to him. Guardians could not do that. Now inquiry was instituted into an accident, and in five cases out of six the result was that the man was told he could not work there any longer. The Act was so stringent, and there was so much risk of bogus claims, that old men could no longer be employed with safety. But clearly a man of sixty perfectly able to work ought never to come upon the rates, but he did not think the question of the Compensation Act came before a Conference dealing with the relief of the poor.

Mrs BATTERS (Holywell) thought it was unnecessary that these older workmen should come upon the parish. Very often a man of sixty was capable of doing better work than a young man of eighteen. Young men had not the experience of the older men, who were generally more careful in their work. That was her experience. In Holywell they had not a single case of a man who had received compensation becoming chargeable to the rates. As to the medical officer, she did not agree with Mr Alsop's contention that this officer should be given more power, because the medical officer usually was far too fond of ordering things for paupers which were not required. She thought that Guardians should know every case themselves, and make a point of helping the relieving officer in his difficult work.

Mr JOHN PETRIE (Holywell) observed that the remarks in regard to the Workmen's Compensation Act appealed to him personally. He agreed with what had been said as to the Act not being entirely in favour of the workman. A few weeks ago he was asked to recommend a young man for employment on the railway, and was astounded to find that one of the conditions was that no man over thirty-five years of age should be employed by that railway company. He thought it was rather extreme to say that a man over thirty-five should not be employed on a railway, though probably this condition applied only to new servants. No doubt it was dangerous work, but many a man of 60 was worth two of 18. No doubt many men had been dismissed because they had a few grey hairs. But he thought that the operation of the Workmen's Compensation Act was outside their province as Guardians so far as any amendment was concerned, but no doubt the experience of Guardians might be utilised in guiding the Legislature in proper directions. He rather fancied that the Legislature had gone mad in recent years in regard to all the things it wanted to do for the people. As regards appointment of officers, he urged that public representatives should bring to bear the same principles in appointing officers as they would do in their own private business, and he was astounded that so many local authorities should over and over again recommend the square man for the round hole. Public appointments should be made on merit, and not because the candidates happened to belong to a particular denomination, or on account of family connection. He was pleased to think that at least one Board represented at that Conference had something like a system for appointing responsible officers, and he hoped the Carnarvon example would be taken to heart.

Rev. ARTHUR R. ALSOP then replied to the debate, thanking the Conference for the kind reception accorded to his paper, which was a maiden effort. Not only had the delegates been blind to his faults, but they had been kind too. He regretted having inadvertently misrepresented what Mrs Elias had said in 1900, and was glad that lady stuck to her opinions. With regard to the half-yearly inspection of cases, he did not mean that this should be done by a full committee, but by a small business committee of representatives of each parish. His statistics had been obtained from official sources for England and Wales. If he had known that the statistics for Wales, where pauperism had decreased so much during the last fifteen years, were so excellent, his comparison might have been different. He was glad to think Carnarvon had such a perfect system, and he would go back to Cannock and try to instil into his colleagues the example set before them that day. He was glad to hear Mr Harding Roberts stick up for red tape, and regretted that there was not more originality in his paper, most of the contents of which had been heard fifty years ago. The only matter upon which he had ventured to be original, that of giving medical officers more scope, had unfortunately been objected to more than anything else. (Applause.)

THE TREATMENT OF YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF RESCUE WORK.

BY MISS EDITH CHAMPNEYS,

Guardian, Conway Union.

THE subject which I have before me is one which I should much prefer a more experienced person to deal with, but having been asked to do so, I hope you will take my ideas and remarks as merely opening out to you the possibilities which are ours, as Guardians, of raising the characters of many of the young women who come into our maternity wards, if we cannot lift the standard of public morality higher.

It has been said Poor Law Guardians are left with the failures and laggards on their hands, those who are suffering from other people's sins and follies, and those who are not wanted in the world. The community hands them to us and says, "Take them and do what you can with them; we trust them to you; we have not time to look after them ourselves; we will give you the money that is necessary for their maintenance, only don't let them cost too much, as it is all we can do to make our own way in the world." So the responsibility is ours. Much of the material seems very hopeless, but, as Guardians, we have two things on our side—time and money—in which to refit the failures and develop the individual. Surely we have the hope of returning many to the community, to be no longer a tax upon it, but who shall contribute their full share to the general good. Let us remember about our work as Guardians that it either allows those committed to our care to deteriorate and multiply, or improves them, according to the methods we employ in dealing with them, and all here will agree that where improvement is possible it is the better alterna-

tive, and one to be striven for. I only hope you may think that some of the methods suggested to-day for dealing with young women who come under our care are deserving of your attention.

Something must be done to deal with the stream of young women entering our Workhouses, to lessen, if not to check it, as far as possible. The point is to find out the right course to pursue, and then carry it out. The three heads to be briefly considered in this paper, and afterwards to be discussed with, I hope, some practical result, are—Firstly, the feeble-minded women and children; secondly, the irreclaimable; thirdly, those who might be helped.

The question of detention has been brought forward a good deal, but so far has not been dealt with at any of the North Wales Conferences, therefore I am glad to have this opportunity of introducing this important question to you, especially as it concerns the many sad cases of feeble-minded women and girls so constantly brought under our care. The care of the feeble-minded amongst our young mothers in maternity wards should have the most careful attention of Guardians, and it is the first point for you to consider. It is very necessary that Boards of Guardians should be aware of how many feeble-minded children they have on their books receiving outdoor relief or boarded out. The medical officers and the relieving officers should be instructed to bring such cases specially before the Guardians, who should request the educational authorities to send these children to proper institutions to be kept permanently. The present system, or rather the want of it, that is shown in dealing with the feeble-minded children, whether in Workhouses or in receipt of outdoor relief, is very much to be deplored. As individuals, too, we ought to bring before the educational authorities all feeble-minded children who are not receiving special instruction, as every one of these children, unless looked after, means so many more on

the rates later on. Think of the hard fate of so many uncared-for feeble-minded children! Follow a few individual cases—will it not invariably be with sad result? You will easily trace them to our gaols and refuges, or you can find many on the streets in our large towns, unable to protect themselves and without protectors. Surely you all know such cases. Why should they still be allowed to go out into the world uncared for? When a feeble-minded girl has drifted into our maternity wards, as is so often the case, an easy prey to any cowardly scoundrel, should we not urge the detention of this class under special medical certificate? Let us hope the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded will advocate this. I am at this moment thinking of a girl who has recently dismissed herself from the Conway Union, after the birth of her second child, because the doctor said he could not classify her as a lunatic—she was only feeble-minded. But such cases should be specially considered and certified, for they are as dangerous to the community as lunatics, and unless they can be detained in the first instance they probably return later, and become a heavier burden on the rates.

Before considering the other two classes I would earnestly plead that the Guardians should have rescue workers in every Workhouse, who will care for the cases individually. No doubt you will think I am speaking as if all can be helped quite easily—indeed it is not so, and one expects many disappointments. But, thank God, there are remedies to be used, though they need time and patience, and require a new atmosphere of health and faith and hope imparting. Think how low the standard of life is amongst the women who come into our Workhouses. They have practically had no idea of responsibility, their moral training has probably been almost *nil*, and all know what great want of control there is amongst children nowadays. Look at the overcrowded sleeping accommodation in many homes. How can we expect our young people

to turn out decently when they have not been brought up with decent sleeping accommodation? You say, This paper is dealing with Workhouses, and what has sleeping accommodation to do with this question? It is all intermingled, and one cannot help speaking of the reason *why* they ever come in. Guardians, as District Councillors, have so much also to do with the housing question. Could they not often use their power more than they do in condemning the indecent overcrowding and the insanitary state of some of the houses in their district? Do we consider it half enough, or does it even strike us at all, when outdoor relief is given, that it is *our* duty to inquire and personally gain knowledge as to whether any of these cases are living under overcrowded conditions? This is a most important point as regards practical help in this difficult question.

Now to my point. It is surely an understood thing lady Guardians, where there are any on a Board, will be interested in the women inmates, but something more than that is wanted. Going through our list of inmates, every House Committee day, do we realise when a young mother and baby have gone out, that we have hardly seen the girl, made very few inquiries into her story, hardly even spoken to her or done the least thing to influence her? Do many Boards of Guardians take sufficient trouble to father the child, and show that they will not allow the rates to be used to support children when there is a father who can be made to accept his responsibility? In the Conway Union this is not considered advisable at all, but these remarks may be discussed.

In small Unions we could easily do more to help our girls. Could not the Chairman of each Board, at least, specially bring the possibilities of such work before the lady Guardians, asking each one to try to do something for the girls from her own district, and inquire into their histories, &c. In big Unions, a

Magdalen Society should be started, responsible to the Guardians for their work.

The women can be divided into two classes—firstly, those who do not wish to be helped ; secondly, those to whom a helping hand and good advice may make all the difference, as it will spur them on to self-control, self-respect, and effort.

The first I name are sad to think of, but before we condemn any one, ascertain if she has ever had a good chance. Think of her, in the first case, going out to earn her living again, her character lost, her respectable friends, not always, but generally, having given her up. Who will take her as a servant? How can she live if it costs her entire wages—probably 4s. or 5s. a week—to pay for her child's keep? Where does she get enough money to summon the father, and issue a warrant against him when he fails to pay? Yes, look well into these facts before you judge. No doubt we have many older women coming and going regularly ; what to do with them is a very serious and difficult question. Personally, I agree with those Guardians who strongly advocate that women who have lost all self-control, becoming so completely depraved and demoralised as to be a danger to and a burden upon the community, should have their liberty taken from them. Unfortunately, at present the law does not look upon this sin as criminal. The number of unmarried mothers now in Conway Workhouse with more than one child is four ; each of the four has three children. Does not that fact prove that detention after a second case is a point to be seriously considered and discussed with a view to some result.

Now for our second class—those who wish to be helped. Here comes in plenty of scope for rescue work. Much help can be given by the officials, and personally, I speak most gratefully of the help I have received in different cases from the Clerk and relieving officers. As you may judge from my remarks, my

experience has not been very great, and you may think I am too hopeful, but if you had seen some results, as I have, from other people's work, you would take courage and resolve to do something to help the fallen ones now waiting to be raised. Some people think what we really want is, a sufficient number of Homes for these young girls, to which Guardians, after due consideration, could send suitable cases, at a cost of so much per head per week—the cost not to exceed that of maintenance in a Workhouse—the ratepayers would therefore only be paying for the case to be maintained at some institution other than the Workhouse. In these Homes special training would be given, and individual interest be taken in each case.

Do not think I wish all cases to be sent to Homes instead of the Workhouse—sin is not to be made easier—but the local workers could in some first and hopeful cases specially recommend the Guardians to consider this individual case. Until this can be done, let us resolve to do all that lies in our power. Personal influence—great tact and firmness—is required; and then, though there would be many disappointments, yet there would be many helped permanently. I could tell you of cases helped—known to others, but such things are not for public print. What I urge to-day, and ask you to consider is, the splendid possibilities that lie before us in the great field of work of which we have chosen to be Guardians.

The following figures give some idea of the state of immorality in this Christian country of ours:—In the year 1880, the entire population of England and Wales was 25,714,288, and the illegitimate births registered were 48 per thousand. Ten years later the population had increased to 28,763,673, and the illegitimate births were 44 per thousand. Six years ago, in 1900, the population had risen to 32,249,187, and the illegitimate births registered were 40 per thousand.

Considering the increase of the population, the improvement is greatly marked, but does it not give rise to a very serious point—to be considered by the Church and other religious bodies—what is amiss with their teaching on this point?

Look at these figures in another way. In North Wales alone the illegitimate births registered for the ten years from 1893 to 1903 are 62 per thousand, as against 40 per thousand for the whole of England and Wales.

Take the figures again, and treat them in a very local manner. For the last three years the number of illegitimate births registered in the various parishes in the Union of Conway is 118. The population of that Union is 34,005.

Do we realise the facts these figures reveal—awful facts, surely enough to stir us all to consider how we can each one of us do something to remove the dark stain of impurity from our land. I believe there is no Rescue Home in the whole of North Wales. If one result of this Conference could be that some of those present should realise how greatly some work of this kind is needed, would it not be a most probable way of reducing the statistics in years to come, and helping those at present uncared for and seldom helped.

The immorality amongst such a large number of domestic servants is a startling fact. Why should this be? Is it not the feeling of absolute loneliness and want of sympathy that often causes a servant's downfall? Not so much want of money, as want of a friend. It may sound very old-fashioned to say it, but mistresses can and should take greater care of their young servants as regards their free time and evenings out. Such things can easily be controlled or forbidden.

When a young servant dismisses herself from the Union, could not power of detention be given if she cannot show the Guardians she has a home ready, or money to pay for her child's support? Or, if such cases

must be allowed to leave entirely unprovided for, would not more connection between the Guardians and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children be a great advantage, and save many a sad story often revealed later in the police court?

If "prevention is better than cure," I must add a plea for preventive work. Do we, as Guardians, allow much or any preventive work to be carried on in our Workhouses? There are great purity societies, let us encourage them to help us. I hope any lady here interested in purity societies working amongst girls will tell us about their work. I will briefly mention one, namely, the Girls' Friendly Society; and I am glad to say an associate of this society is allowed, by kind permission of the Guardians, to visit Conway Workhouse and have a class for the children; but I fancy we might take more advantage of the work of this society.

At the present time ladies are working in 447 Workhouses, and last year 5,535 Workhouse children were brought under their influence. The society does not in any way interfere with the Poor Law officials, but works with them for the good of the girls in their charge. It is in a position to do this, for it has a well thought-out organisation, which endeavours not only to look after girls in this country, but to watch over them if they emigrate, and to keep in touch with them wherever they are. If the girls are allowed to get to know these ladies, they feel that they have always a friend to whom they can go in any trouble. One very mistaken argument often used against the Girls' Friendly Society, is to call it a Church society. This shows entire ignorance of the rules. The members, numbering at present over 230,000, with the younger candidates, are drawn from *every* religious denomination, including Roman Catholics and Jews. The one great object of the society, with which every Christian must surely agree, is "to bind women and girls together

for mutual help, sympathy, and prayer; to encourage purity of life, dutifulness to parents, faithfulness to employers, temperance, and thrift." If this aim were carried out fully, many a young woman would be saved from contact with Workhouse inmates at any time, as we should find few people comparatively on the rates if it were not for impurity, intemperance, and thriftlessness.

Have I at all brought before you clearly my chief points in regard to the question I have striven to call your attention to? If so, I hope they may receive your consideration. Let the feeble-minded be better cared for. May the opportunity be given to the most degraded to rise if she wishes to lead a respectable life, and may many a young woman be placed in a good position where she may live in self-respect and self-control, training her child in habits of responsibility and self-restraint to become a respected citizen of our great empire.

DISCUSSION.

Miss B. WALTON EVANS (Local Government Board Inspector of Boarding Out) pointed out the question raised by Miss Champneys appealed particularly to women, and it was one in which she took very much interest. In the course of her work she often came into contact with cases of girls who, if they had been given a kindly and timely helping hand, would have been reclaimed. Dealing specially with the feeble-minded, a question which she had spoken on at Poor Law Conferences before, Miss Evans held that Guardians had no right to send feeble-minded girls out to service. They were certain to have them back on the rates again sooner or later, and unfortunately bringing others with them. This class of girls should be sent to Homes and kept permanently. It would be cheaper in the long run. Miss Champneys did not make it quite clear whether where the Guardians are giving outdoor relief they are to refer the children to the educational authority. That would not be quite consistent, but when relieving officers go into a house where outdoor relief is being given to a member, not necessarily to the family, and a child is found to be feeble-minded, or a medical officer was in attendance, the education authority might be notified. That would give them information of the number of feeble-minded children in the Poor Law classes. The education authority might then be approached to form special classes or establish special

schools. She believed there was such a school at Wrexham, but otherwise there were no special schools in North Wales for feeble-minded children. They wanted the education authorities to take the matter up and do something. In regard to hopeful cases, this was where women came so usefully into the administration of Workhouses. She would like to see in every Workhouse a ladies' committee of rescue workers to take up these cases. But there were many Boards of Guardians still without lady Guardians upon them. Even if Guardians would appoint ladies to take up this rescue work, she was quite sure a great deal more good could be done in North Wales than is being done at present. Then there were the first cases, which were as bad as those of women who were in for their second or third confinement. It would be right to approach the Local Government Board for sanction to send a case of that sort to a Home, however promising it might look. A ladies' committee would be able to give Guardians information on cases of this sort, and then the Board could consider what should be done with them. In cases where there was a ladies' committee, she had known when the mother took her discharge that they had placed the child into a home and received the mother's wages for the care of the child, and they would see that it was properly looked after. The mother would be kept in touch with her child, and in that way both mother and child would be rescued. They all knew that when a girl left a Workhouse under these circumstances everything was against her. She could only obtain a poor situation with paltry wages, hardly sufficient to secure a home for the child. But with a ladies' committee interested in the case, paying the foster-mother and looking after the child, a better result would be obtained. The mother would be uplifted, and that was what they were all trying for. In North Wales they wanted more rescue work, and she felt that the appointment of a ladies' committee in each Union would be a means to this end. Something would then be done to lessen the statistics, which were not a credit to them at all. (Cheers.)

Mr C. A. JONES (Carnarvon) desired to correct Miss Champney's statement that there was no Rescue Home in the whole of North Wales. There was a Rescue Home in Carnarvon, and he believed that the wife of their President that day was president of the Society, a society for the protection of friendless girls. From his own knowledge he could say that work was most valuable. A mission woman worked in connection with it, and attended the police courts in the town. In every case in which a girl was likely to fall, the matter was taken up by Mrs Darbishire and other friends. Suitable homes and situations were found for the girls, and in that way much good was accomplished. He would be glad to hear that such an institution was to be found in every town in North Wales.

Mr T. J. LLOYD (Carnarvon Union) remarked that the excellent work done by the ladies brought shame to the faces of the men. They, as Guardians, ought to do all they possibly could to uplift their

less fortunate fellow-creatures. The reading of the paper impressed him with the importance of the family life being clean and healthy, and he felt that those who took girls into their service ought to keep them under observation and take every possible care of them. There were men, as they were all aware, who were so inhuman as to take advantage of weak-minded girls. He thought it was the duty of Guardians and others to see that proper protection was given to weak-minded girls, and that they should not be open to all kinds of temptation. The matter was one that ought to receive the earnest attention of every Board of Guardians.

Mrs BATTERS (Holywell) remarked that as Guardians they should be extremely obliged to Miss Champneys for bringing this important question before them. In the past Guardians had done too little for this class of poor, unfortunate creatures to be found in every Union. Lady Guardians had more opportunity for dealing with these cases than male Guardians, who seldom went into the maternity wards, and so did not come in contact with the women. She cited a sad case at Holywell coming under her own notice, and referred to the excellent work being done by the Girls' Friendly Society, of which she was the head in that district. She took charge of the girls, and gave three cases in which they had been saved and were now doing well in their various situations. If these girls had not been looked after they would have been thrown upon the world. She hoped that Guardians would take up this question energetically, and endeavour to start a Rescue Home for North Wales. She did not think such an institution was required in every town, and several Unions could be grouped together for this particular purpose. She favoured the granting of some power of detention to Boards of Guardians, say for a period of six months, with the option of renewal if necessary. That was really the only way to deal with these cases of feeble-minded girls. She referred to the good work being done by ladies in Conway in endeavouring to raise the moral tone and life of the country, and expressed the earnest hope that a result of Miss Champneys' paper would be to lead to an organisation of rescue work in North Wales.

Mr W. M. ROBERTS (Carnarvon) thought that the paper to which they had listened with such pleasure would be an inspiration to every Guardian. In these cases men were quite helpless, and he heartily endorsed the suggestion that there should be outside ladies' committees to deal with them. He supported the suggestion that there should be some effort made to secure a Rescue Home to take charge of these poor girls. The work which had thus been fore-shadowed was well worthy of the consideration of the Conference, and he hoped that a practical issue would be obtained.

Mrs SAUNDERS (Bangor and Beaumaris) said work in this direction was also proceeding at Bangor. One lady in particular had worked among the feeble-minded girls for thirty years. They were most careful with the first cases, and paid great attention to where

the girl went to. Having referred to particular cases, she expressed the opinion that much good work could be done if the various Unions could be grouped together for this special purpose.

Mrs BATTERS asked if a suggestion could be made to Boards of Guardians that a Rescue Home should be started in a central place.

The HON. SECRETARY said that Miss Champneys would make a note of the suggestion.

The PRESIDENT pointed out that a special local difficulty in satisfactorily dealing with this question was the existence of so many lodging-houses in the seaside resorts. In one case Mrs Darbishire found a place for a girl, and it was afterwards found she had eighteen beds to make every day, and only one other servant was kept in the house. Such conditions made successful rescue work extremely difficult.

The debate then stood adjourned until the following day.

An invitation was accepted to hold next year's Conference at Corwen, Merionethshire, an invitation from Bangor being held in abeyance.

The Conference then adjourned, and afterwards the delegates enjoyed a trip by steamer through Menai Straits, tea on board being provided by Mr C. A. Jones, who was accorded a hearty vote of thanks for his welcome hospitality.

WEDNESDAY, 5TH SEPTEMBER.

On resuming, the President again took the chair.

Mrs Batters (Holywell), Mr S. Jones (Wrexham), and Mr P. Harding Roberts (Holywell), were unanimously re-elected representatives of the North Wales Conference on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

The HON. SECRETARY submitted the balance-sheet, which showed a balance in hand of £6. 16s. Only two Unions had not subscribed, viz., Forden and Machynlleth.

The balance-sheet was taken as read, and unanimously adopted.

In reply to a question,

The HON. SECRETARY explained the difficulties of circulating prints of the papers before the Conference, and suggested that if the subscription were raised from 7s. 6d. to 10s. for each Union, free copies of the papers could be supplied to delegates. This would probably meet the views of the Conference.

On the motion of Mr HUGH THOMAS, it was resolved that the subscription should be increased, as suggested by Mr Harding Roberts.

The discussion on Miss Champneys' paper was then resumed.

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell) pointed out that the state-

ment in the paper that the question of detention had not previously been dealt with at the North Wales Conferences was incorrect, as the subject had been dealt with in a paper read at the Conference in 1902. Powers of detention formed a very difficult question, but taking the view so ably presented by Miss Champneys, the necessity of Guardians being vested with greater powers of detention than they now possessed was shown. Illustrations of the serious consequences arising through the lack of these powers had been given, but after all they must not forget that they were a British nation, and freedom of the subject was one of its bulwarks and charters. Therefore any curtailment of freedom in extreme cases must be accompanied by precautions and safeguards applying generally as well as particularly. The suggestion that had been made was that in second cases the law should consider that the woman was not able to control her own movements, and ought to be under some detention. Whether that should be by rescue work or by the Workhouse was a matter which the Legislature would have to decide. The cases which had been given showed there was a necessity for these extended powers being granted, not only in regard to the special class under consideration, but also in that class of women who were absolutely incapable of attending to themselves—the imbecile class, which involve not only themselves but others in difficulty, and become chargeable to the poor rate. Such class were not possessed of that stamina which would give them self-reliance or independence when the time came for them to maintain themselves. He agreed with Miss Champneys that something should be done on this question of rescue work, and probably a suggestion would be thrown out later that steps be taken towards organising some institution for rescue work among the class referred to in the paper. That would be a subject the Guardians in North Wales could take up with advantage to themselves and to the ratepayers. One other feature of the case presented by Miss Champneys might also be emphasised, viz., the responsibilities in connection with work of the rural District Councils and the work of Boards of Guardians. It was impossible to bring up a healthy, self-respecting class of people in surroundings which did not contribute to morality or a high standard of living. In many cases children were brought up in homes which gave no prospect of ever making them good citizens. Although they were discussing the Poor Law aspect of the question, still there was a serious responsibility cast upon rural District Councils to see that the houses occupied by the people were sanitary and not overcrowded. They came across cases where the parents and adult boys and girls all occupied rooms indiscriminately. That was not an atmosphere calculated to produce respectable citizens. Sanitary authorities had power to improve the environment of these children, and he hoped that public duty in this respect would not be neglected. He hoped, therefore, that the District Council would see that the houses were kept sanitary, and that there was cleanliness on the part

of individuals. The Guardians might threaten to withhold relief if these things were not attended to, and by that means they might materially assist to improve the condition of the homes. In this way the work of District Councils and the Boards of Guardians might be associated, and so produce a better class of people in the future. In concluding, Mr Harding Roberts thanked Miss Champneys for having come to his rescue in consenting to read a paper at that Conference. He had had great difficulty in securing papers, not because gentlemen were unwilling to contribute, but because after promising, various causes, such as indisposition, had prevented. Miss Champneys had come forward at very short notice, and the valuable paper she had read was evidence of her knowledge of and interest in the subject.

Mr J. PETRIE (Holywell) ventured to think that Boards of Guardians could help on rescue work while the Legislature was considering the question of giving them further powers of detention. He thought it was a shame that several Boards of Guardians in that district should be lacking the great advantage of lady Guardians. Speaking as a member of a Board which had seven lady members, he could say that he did not know what they would do without them. He hoped that the Boards of Guardians would soon rectify their error in this respect. This special work appealed to ladies more than to men; their sympathies were broader, and they were better qualified to take up the work. He hoped that all the Boards represented would seriously consider the question of forming committees of ladies for rescue work, because the good that would result would be almost incalculable. He hoped that the remarks made in the course of the discussion would bear fruit.

Mrs ELIAS (Holyhead), having expressed her pleasure at hearing the paper, said that in every Union there were these sad cases. Although they had not so many at Holyhead, yet they had cases of girls coming in two or three times; they had no home, and gradually, after leaving, drifted back again to the Workhouse. They could not support their children, and yet were expected to do so. She thought Boards of Guardians ought to have more power to detain this class for a certain period. In Holyhead there had been a grandmother in the Workhouse, and the mother had been in four or five times, and yet was allowed to go out although she was feeble-minded. A lady had interested herself in the case, and it was now at Edgbaston, but clearly in that case the girl ought never to have left the Workhouse. Having cited a similar case, showing the value of well-directed work on behalf of the girl, Mrs Elias strongly urged the systematic care of these cases to prevent them hopelessly continuing in association with the Poor Law.

Mr JAMES PRINCE (Holywell), referring to the demand for powers of detention, pointed out the desirability of keeping the feeble-minded class distinct from other classes. They should urge the detention of that class under special medical certificate. Perhaps as Boards of

Guardians they had not very much power at present to deal with the feeble-minded, but, on the other hand, the medical officers had power. In dealing with feeble-minded young women who came into the Workhouse, it would be a good thing if the medical officer would "stretch a point"—that was the best way he could put it—when the female was on the border line between sanity and insanity. The medical officer could often detain a feeble-minded girl if he would, though the Workhouse was not the proper place for such an individual. The County Councils were the proper bodies to undertake the provision of proper places, and those authorities had the power if they liked to exercise it. They could build an institution to come between the Workhouse and the asylum. The medical officer refused to send these cases to the asylum, because it was not a fit and proper place for the cases, and if they were so sent the medical officer of the asylum might refuse to receive them and send them back to the Workhouse. If the County Councils would undertake this work of providing a place for the feeble-minded, the imbeciles, and the epileptics, he believed that the Government would make a grant, as was done in cases now with lunatics. This would result in great relief to the Workhouse and to the ratepayers. He recalled that seven or eight years ago he had raised the matter in the Flint County Council, when he had had an offer of the old jail at Mold, which cost £35,000 to build. It was a most desirable building, and had been offered to them for £5,000. But the County Council did not see their way to take the matter up then. But this particular building, now occupied by a French religious order, was large enough for the two counties of Flint and Denbigh, and would meet all their requirements for an intermediate asylum for feeble-minded imbeciles and epileptics, of whom there were a great many in the counties. He thought the paper read to them was extremely valuable, and would lead to something being done. (Cheers.)

Mr HENRY PARRY (Carnarvon), speaking in Welsh, said that in his opinion this unfortunate class of people lived on the Carnarvon Guardians, and it was high time the practice was stopped.

Mr T. ROBERTS (Festiniog) thanked Miss Champneys for her paper, and in order that some practical result of the discussion might be obtained, moved that Boards of Guardians be urged to influence the Local Government Board and the Legislature to give further powers of detention to Boards of Guardians of this class of inmate, and to sanction the establishment of special institutions for their treatment.

Mr PRITCHARD seconded the motion, and instanced a case of great difficulty which had occurred within his experience. This case occurred within the Workhouse, but the officials were exonerated from all blame. It was practically impossible to exercise the supervision required, and this showed the need for a special institution to deal with this class of case. The Local Government Board had been asked if such an institution existed, but up to the present a reply had not been received.

The HON. SECRETARY took it that the resolution only referred to powers of detention, but the question raised by the paper was two-fold, and dealt not only with those persons in the Workhouse, but also those who might be likely to enter. Rescue Homes would be provided by voluntary effort.

Mrs W. A. DARBISHIRE (Mayoress of Carnarvon) explained that she was connected with a small Rescue Society in Carnarvon for the care of lonely, friendless girls. There was an excellent Rescue Home at Chester, to which they sometimes sent girls, and it was conducted by Miss Wright, who was no doubt known to many of the delegates. There the girls were kept until they had sufficiently improved in conduct to be sent elsewhere to other homes, or if they turned out pretty right would obtain a situation for them. She did not know whether this Home took feeble-minded cases, but she strongly urged that they should not be allowed about at their own free will. Of course, some were more easily led away than others, but the great point was to get them taken care of. It was all very well to say get a girl away, but few knew the difficulty of getting them away from Carnarvon. The girl might be got all ready and reach the station, and then at the last minute refuse to go, returning to her old condition of life. They had no power over a girl after she was sixteen. They could not be made to go except by their own free will, and it would be much the best if some arrangements could be made whereby they could be taken care of. Mrs Darbshire was inclined to think that remedial measures must begin further back, and they must deal with the feeble-minded children. She believed there was no home in North Wales for such children, and it was wonderful what a few years' good training would do for a feeble-minded child, who could be turned into a useful member of society. There was a case of a feeble-minded boy at Groeslon, near Carnarvon. A home was found for him in Devonshire, but a condition was that the father and mother should follow him and live near. That was impossible, so the case fell through. The boy was mischievously inclined and might become a trouble some day, but there was nowhere to send him. She therefore thought the need was for a home for children before they reached adult age. (Cheers.)

The PRESIDENT could not see why a portion of the Workhouse could not be set aside for such cases. Surely it was possible to have a department. He was told that it was a very difficult thing to do, but he did not believe in difficulties. In conducting the relief of the poor they ought to have very much better legislation altogether, and let the Workhouse be divided into three departments, one for the criminal section, another for those who got into difficulties for a little while and who only wanted a little rest from the world, and the third for those who had to be taken care of like children. Each department ought to be quite separate, although they could be under the same roof. That was what they wanted to impress upon the Local Government Board, that the Workhouse should be made a

much more useful institution. Possibly he was speaking very wide of the mark, and though it might not be done in his time he believed that was the solution of the problem.

Mr HUGH THOMAS (Bangor) observed that while they all appreciated the importance of the question, at the same time they were all sensible of the difficulties. He endorsed the view that they should endeavour to get lady Guardians interested in these cases, by whom they all felt that the work could be done more effectually than by male Guardians. He hoped that the Boards generally would consider what could be done. A point to which he wished to call attention was also alluded to in Miss Champneys' excellent paper, viz., the crowded condition of many of the people's homes. They might get information on this aspect of the subject by pressing upon the relieving officers the necessity for making inquiries when they visited cases as to the accommodation for the family. He could instance deplorable cases as the result of elder children being allowed to sleep together. This indicated that something could be done by those Guardians who were also District Councillors to deal with those who are not paupers to lessen overcrowding. This seemed to be one of the roots of the evil.

Mr JOHN WILLIAMS (St Asaph) endorsed the remarks about lady Guardians, and said that the Board which was without a lady member must be a very dull Board. He believed that the paper read the previous day would do a great deal to improve matters in this respect. A special committee of ladies should be appointed in each Union, and although in his Union some gentlemen did not seem to approve of such a committee, it did most useful work. That committee went round the House occasionally, and reported to the Guardians what they thought should be done.

Mr J. R. HUGHES (Carnarvon) observed that, considering the amount of overcrowding the wonder was not that there were feeble-minded children, but that there were so few. To get at the root of the evil they must deal with the surroundings in which the children are brought up. A Royal Commission was now sitting upon this very question, and he was eagerly anticipating its Report. Until the Commission had concluded its labours, he did not see very well how they could move in the matter. The asylums were overcrowded, and he believed that this class of case could be dealt with outside the asylum. If they could only get the ladies to interest themselves in this question, as the Mayoress of Carnarvon did, and support them, and endeavour to reduce overcrowding, they might then in time get the business attended to in a proper manner.

Miss EDITH CHAMPNEYS, in reply, thanked the delegates for the kind reception of her first paper and its simple remarks. She was glad to hear from Mrs Darbishire and Mr Jones that there was an institution in Carnarvon doing good work amongst the friendless girls, though it seemed to be more the work of prevention than that of rescue. Homes for first cases would of course be helpful, but

there was no home nearer than the one at Chester. She thanked Mr Harding Roberts for his correction, and had made the statement on what she had regarded as reliable information. With regard to Mr Prince's remarks, she sincerely wished the medical officers would "stretch a point" sometimes, and mentioned a case from Llandudno in which it would have been most useful. She sincerely hoped that her remarks would lead to some practical result, and endorsed Mrs Darbishire's suggestion in regard to the feeble-minded children. An important thing would be for the education authorities to take up these cases and send the children to Homes. There was one in Manchester. She agreed as to the evils of overcrowding, and as to ladies' committees Miss Champneys suggested that good results might accrue from a circular-letter to Boards of Guardians suggesting the appointment of ladies' committees for rescue work. This would be one step up the ladder, and though it might take a long time, the need for doing something was great, as was shown by the statistics. In the last three years there were 118 illegitimate births in the various parishes of the Conway Union, but nearly half the cases came from only two parishes in that Union, though these did not come entirely from the resident population. But the figures, considering the population, constituted a scandal. If they desired to raise the moral standard, as they all wished to do, surely the facts should be made public. She was not pressing for extra rate aid, but only for more personal interest from lady Guardians and lady committees. If they could only help one case, surely that was worth any amount of trouble. In concluding, she quoted Jean Ingelow's words—"We much are bound to them that do succeed, but in a more pathetic sense are bound to those that fail." (Cheers.)

Mr PRINCE desired to incorporate in the resolution an expression of opinion that the 4s. grant should be extended to certified institutions for the feeble-minded, but it was decided to take this as a separate motion.

It was then unanimously resolved that a communication be sent to the Boards of Guardians in North Wales bearing upon the subject of Miss Champneys' paper, and it was left to Miss Champneys and Mr Harding Roberts to draft the circular.

On the motion of Mr THOMAS ROBERTS, seconded by Mr PRITCHARD, it was resolved to the following effect:—"That in view of the large number of feeble-minded single females who are admitted into the maternity wards of Workhouses, and whom the medical officer is unable to certify as lunatics, this Conference respectfully urges the Local Government Board to seek Parliamentary powers with a view to enabling Guardians to detain this class of persons at the Workhouse or any other suitable institution provided for the purpose, and so prevent such persons returning to their former environment and becoming again a burden upon the rates."

On the motion of Mr PRINCE, seconded by Mr PARRY, it was

resolved :—"That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that the grant of 4s. per head now payable in respect of pauper lunatics be extended, and be made payable in respect of the maintenance of feeble-minded persons in institutions or other places where such class of paupers are maintained."

MR CHARLES A. JONES then read the following paper :—

MAINTENANCE OF PARENTS BY THEIR CHILDREN.

BY MR CHARLES A. JONES,

Solicitor; Guardian, Carnarvon Union.

HAVING been asked to read a paper at the North Wales Poor Law Conference, in fixing upon my subject, "Maintenance of Parents by their Children," I had two objects in view.

1. To invite a discussion upon what has occupied a prominent part of the duties of a Guardian at meetings of Boards throughout the country, and upon the law of which I venture to think there is considerable misapprehension ; and

2. In the hopes that a public declaration of the liability and duties of children towards their parents might have a beneficial effect in the future.

The first Act of Parliament which was passed for the support of pauper relatives was 43 Elizabeth, chap. 2, section 6, which provides :—

"And the father and grandfather, and the mother and grandmother, and the children of every poor, old, blind, lame, and impotent person, or other poor person not able to work, being of a sufficient ability, shall at their own charges relieve and maintain every such poor person in that manner and according to that rate as shall be assessed by the justices."

This Act, it will be observed, extends only to natural relations, that is to say, to cases where there is relationship by blood between the parties, and there-

fore under the statute the man cannot be compelled to contribute to the maintenance of his wife's mother or his wife's children by her former husband, but the grandfather is liable to contribute to the maintenance of his grandchild even although the father be alive, if the latter be unable to support him; but the case of *Maund v. Mason* decides that under the statute the grandchild is not liable to maintain the grandfather.

This provision for maintenance of relatives has been supplemented by other Acts, and the procedure has also been amended, but it still remains a fundamental law under which persons are required to support their poor relatives, and so prevent them from being maintained at the general cost of the rates. There are, however, a number of points which have arisen from time to time in the matter, and which have never been definitely or authoritatively settled.

One of these is whether a poor old person not able to work can himself take proceedings against his relatives, or must these proceedings be taken by the Poor Law authorities. I believe it is the general opinion that the Poor Law authorities alone have the right to proceed; at any rate, in the Union of which I have been for some years a member, this has been the practice. Relief is granted by the Guardians to the person applying, which gives the Guardians the right to proceed against the relative. In my opinion this is clearly the right practice, for the section of the Act distinctly states that before the order is made by the justices they must be satisfied that the person is chargeable upon the rates, and also that the party ordered is of sufficient ability, and the evidence usually given is by the relieving officer, who is able to obtain information on the earnings of the party sought to be charged; the invariable practice also appears to be that the order should be made in such a form that the contribution payable should be directed to the Guardians. The object of this is obvious, viz.:—To prevent

collusion between relatives, and to ensure payment to the pauper.

I have been much struck at the reluctance displayed by children in their willingness to contribute towards the maintenance of their parents. One would have thought that affection for those who had brought them up and nursed them through life, and enabled them to earn a living for themselves, would have prompted better feeling in this respect, and that old people who have striven hard to bring up their children would not be placed in the humiliating position of having to resort to the intervention of a Poor Law official for relief. I have seen instances of almost absolute refusal by children to contribute. Indeed this has struck me more than anything I have come across during my experience as a Guardian. Children whom I know to have been in receipt of good wages, and well able to contribute three or four shillings a week towards the maintenance of their parents, have pleaded excuses until I have felt almost ashamed at one's countrymen displaying such callousness towards those who ought to be nearest and dearest to them. So earnest have been their pleas that I have seen Guardians induced even to sympathise with them, and when only small contributions have been suggested and not acted upon, it has become necessary to resort to legal proceedings. On several occasions the magistrates, acting upon the evidence of the relieving officer, have not only made a considerable increase in the orders of the Guardians, but have expressed surprise at the lenient view displayed by the Guardians. I have endeavoured to supplement this statement with a few illustrations of cases which have come under my notice, refraining, of course, from giving names.

L. S., a quarryman, thirty-two years of age, a single man, earning 22s. per week, living with his widowed mother, sixty-six years of age, who received 4s. per week relief. He paid her 10s. a week for his board

and lodgings. Had to be summoned before the magistrates because he refused to pay 1s. a week towards her maintenance. This man actually absconded before the summons could be served.

O. and T. P. refused to contribute towards the maintenance of their mother, aged seventy-nine, getting 5s. a week from the parish. The sons were earning good wages, and actually owning freehold houses. Declined to pay 1s. per week each until proceedings were taken.

H. L., a carter, holding a small farm grazing two cows and three horses, ordered to pay 6d. per week towards 4s. 6d. relief given by the Guardians to his mother, M. L.

H. H., a car proprietor, refused to pay 2s. towards 4s. relief paid by the Guardians to his mother, E. H.

I. and E. G., colliers, earning 25s. per week, refused to pay 1s. each towards 5s. relief given by the Guardians to their mother, M. G. This case was taken before the magistrates, and they increased the order to 1s. 6d. a week each. One brother absconded, and the other rather than pay served a month's imprisonment.

One of the relieving officers has reminded me of a case where an old woman considerably over sixty years of age had to ask for assistance. She had three married sons, able-bodied quarrymen, all of them earning good wages, one with no children. When asked to contribute towards their mother's maintenance they absolutely refused. Two of them appeared before the Board, and not only endeavoured to claim exemption, but attacked their mother, stating that she ought not to get any relief at all ; that she could work and maintain herself. They were asked to pay 1s. per week. On their refusal they were taken before the justices, and an order for 1s. 6d. per week was made, and I am told they have not spoken with their mother ever since.

These are only a few isolated cases which I could

enlarge upon considerably. The reason for this refusal to maintain their parents, so far as I have been able to ascertain, is an idea that the collection of poor rates, and payment by their parents of the same for a number of years, entitles the parents in their old age to a sort of a pension in case of their inability to maintain themselves. Formerly it was considered a great degradation to seek parish money, but unfortunately those times have gone by.

It is refreshing to see that there are occasional exceptions to the cases I have quoted. I am sorry to say they are not so frequent as the refusals.

I can quote numbers of instances from legal text-books of points of practice upon the question, but by doing this I should be labouring the matter unduly, and as my paper is confined to one point of maintenance of parents by their children, I do not think there is much more to be said upon the subject.

At the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws many suggestions have been made by various Boards upon Poor Law questions, and one Board has suggested, as to repayment of relief by relatives, that direct application by relatives to justices might be possible, or, if the intervention of the Poor Law machinery is necessary, that orders might be rendered effective without the necessity of the continued chargeability of the person in respect of whom they were made.

In conclusion, I have to apologise for the meagreness of my paper, which has been written under pressure of business, and I beg to thank the members for having listened to me.

DISCUSSION.

Mr HUGH THOMAS (Bangor) confirmed the difficulty of getting relatives to contribute towards the maintenance of their parents. In many cases the Bangor Guardians had been obliged to take children before the magistrate, but in most cases they had been successful. The practice in Bangor was not quite the same as in Carnarvon, because where a son refused to contribute they would first of all

have reduced the relief. This method of dealing with the difficulty had been found successful. They also found in several cases where they had called upon the sons to contribute, the parents had thrown up the relief. They pressed upon relieving officers the importance of obtaining these contributions, and last year they had recovered no less than £553, which was not a bad record for a small Union. Mr Jones's paper, calling attention to the whole subject, would be very useful.

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell), while thanking Mr Jones for his paper, disagreed with some of the legal aspects it put forth. It was incorrect to say that a man could not be compelled to contribute to the maintenance of the children of his wife by a former husband. Under the original Act of Elizabeth that was so. Under that Act a man was not liable, but by the Act of 1834 that liability had been created, for the section of that Act read: "Every man who, from and after the passing of this Act, shall marry a woman having a child or children, whether such child or children be legitimate or illegitimate, shall be liable to maintain such child or children as part of his family, and shall be chargeable for relief or the cost price thereof granted to or on account of such child or children until such child or children shall respectively attain the age of sixteen years, or until the death of the mother." That was where the point came in, and the liability did continue. He, however, thanked Mr Jones for calling attention to what he considered a very important omission on the part of several Boards of Guardians. He was sorry the cases had been so glaring. Mr Thomas had pointed out a remedy which might be adopted in Carnarvon. The time had not arrived when they should allow sons to be relieved of the obligation imposed upon them by law of maintaining their parents. In fact, they ought not to be deprived of the opportunity of supporting their parents. The spirit of the age was such that having become accustomed to receive relief it had lost the taint it had formerly. Indifference had grown up as the relief had been received from generation to generation, and the difficulty was to make children realise their real position in regard to the maintenance of their relatives. Mr Thomas had mentioned a satisfactory result accruing from insisting on the repayment of relief, and he would like to know what effect that had had in decreasing the amount of relief given; there might be a difficulty there. It might be suggested that a relieving officer would not be so discriminating when he received a commission on the amount he collected. That danger had arisen, and it was one they must avoid. Unless they could show that the contributions received led to a decrease in the gross total of relief granted, it was not answering its purpose. Not only so, their object should be to encourage a spirit of independence as well as reduce rates. They had a useful rule in Holywell, which was strictly enforced, for having a report from relieving officers as to all the relatives of a recipient of relief, and

particulars as to all the money which went into the house from all sources. When it was found that the total income going into the house was sufficient to support all the members, then they considered whether an applicant was likely to starve if relief be refused. It was palpable that such would not be the case, and that the withholding of relief would not have an injurious effect upon an applicant. In Holywell they had in cases only granted relief with a view of the sons being called upon to refund the money, and rather than appear in court they had taken their parents off altogether, and made them self-supporting. The result of their policy was that whereas some years ago only £26 was the gross amount received from relatives, and the out-relief amounted to £10,380 to 5,416 paupers, last year the amount received from relatives totalled £331. 18s. 4d., and the outdoor relief had decreased to £8,329 to 3,453 paupers. He took it that the Guardians had no right to spend ratepayers' money when there were children earning sufficient to support their parents. They must endeavour to teach children their duty in this respect, otherwise they would not be doing their duty as representatives of the public. Of course there were cases in which sons preferred to go to prison rather than to pay 1s. a week towards the support of their aged parents, and such cases should be advertised by way of example. The subject had not been discussed before, and yet it was an important aspect of granting out-relief. At any rate, the results in Holywell were a justification for the strict enforcement of the repayment by relatives of the cost of maintenance.

Mr J. T. LLOYD (Carnarvon) said it was surprising to find the strong objection which sons had to paying towards the support of their aged parents, and Mr Jones's paper was well worthy of attention. A wide publicity of the duties of children in this respect might have beneficial results. Every Guardian had had experience in this matter, and sons should not be allowed to go scot free while their parents lived upon the rates. He thought Mrs Darbishire had got to the root of the matter when she said they must begin with the children. They began too late at present, began when men and women had grown too stupid and old to look at the legal aspects of the case. He thought this subject might advantageously be included in the curriculum of elementary schools. He was glad to think the Carnarvon Education Committee had adopted the Ten Commandments as part of their syllabus, for the children would be taught "Honour thy father and thy mother." If children were thus taught their duty to their parents there could be no excuse for neglect in later years.

Mr HENRY PARRY (Carnarvon), speaking in Welsh, questioned whether it was right for some Unions to withhold relief from widows merely because their sons had declined to contribute towards their maintenance.

Mr MORRIS KYFFIN (Wrexham) introduced the case of a woman receiving 15s. a week compensation for injury to her husband, who had to be sent to an asylum, 5s. from the North Wales Permanent

Relief Society, and 2s. 6d. from a friendly society, and yet objected to pay anything towards the relief of her husband. He wished to know if that woman could by law be compelled to contribute.

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS said that wives were liable to maintain their husbands if they had a separate estate. In the case in point the money was payable in respect of injuries received to her husband, and there was a section in the Lunacy Act by which the Guardians could get possession of the money. The case could well be left in the hands of the Clerk to Guardians.

Mr A. H. RICHARDS (Carnarvon) agreed with most of the remarks that had been made, and felt that the subject was well worthy of discussion. It was one of the most difficult that had to be dealt with in Carnarvon Union. It was discussed at nearly every meeting. The Conference would see from the paper how leniently the sons were dealt with. It was a pity the standard of morality and honour had dropped so low as to give sons the impression they had no responsibilities towards their parents. One way of meeting the difficulty would be to make the obtaining of relief more difficult. A Board of Guardians was often nowadays looked upon as a benefit club, and if a man contributed a small amount to the maintenance of his parents, he then looked upon his responsibilities as ended, whereas he was bound to maintain to the limit of his ability. They had had cases of widows applying for relief when they kept house for their sons, and he was afraid in more cases than one that relief had been granted. The difficulty was when a charge was made upon a son to obtain payment without enforcing it before a magistrate. Unions generally should adopt a more severe form of enforcing their legal rights upon the sons, and he thought Guardians would be justified in adopting such a policy.

Mr HUGH PRITCHARD (Pwllheli) associated himself with Mr Jones's experience, and said that the question was difficult to deal with because it involved not only a set of conditions but also a state of mind. He felt that Guardians were lacking in their duty in this respect, and that they should educate young people that it is their duty to maintain their parents as much as it is the duty of a husband to maintain his wife. An impression seemed to be abroad that by a father having paid rates all his life the son should be allowed to go scot free. These children must be educated to a higher standard and taught that the law is not so, and that if they do not comply with the law they will go to prison. Some existing conditions conduce to the mischief. In some Unions it was the custom for relief to be paid at pay-stations to the children of paupers, and thus the little ones were brought up in an atmosphere of pauperism. They became adapted to their environment, and when the time came sought their quota from the rates. Another condition was the lack of respect shown to the home nowadays. Much was heard about all sorts of colleges, but the one college, the best of all, is the home. To-day the home has not the influence for good it had years ago, and if the home was

allowed to degenerate, a bulwark of the nation would be taken away. Home should exercise its chief function and teach the children a high standard of living. The tendency of present-day legislation was to interfere with home influence, and the time seemed to be coming when the State would be turned into a foster-father. They were giving the children free education, and were going to give them free meals; he thought they ought to draw the line at the provision of meals, if they were going to maintain the relationship of father and son, each being liable to maintain the other. There was a mutuality about it. But it was all very well to point to mischiefs, the difficulty was to find a remedy. In this case he did not think there was a remedy other than the regeneration of the individual. It was the state of mind, a question of morality, not a question of knowledge or law. Men had to be dealt with who were callous and indifferent, and utterly devoid of any sense of filial duty, and who, as long as their parents were maintained out of the rates, would smoke and drink. To regenerate the individual there must be education, and the sort of education must be left to the educational authorities. There was much talk about education, but very little about moral education, and he would go so far as to say that some sort of religious education must be given to the children. It was a definite commandment that children should honour their father and mother. One was afraid to talk of these responsibilities; all the talk was about rational opportunities; but the more attention was paid to the aspect of the question he had indicated, the better it would be for society. On these grounds he endorsed what Mr Lloyd had said, and urged that cases should be considered more carefully, and the law more strictly administered. It seemed to him if there was a taint about indoor relief there was equally a taint about outdoor relief. If children were ashamed for their parents to go into the Workhouse, they should be equally ashamed for them to accept out-relief. It was well worthy the attention of Guardians whether they should not oftener give orders for the House rather than out-relief, and be at great expense to secure the performance of duty by the children. There was another danger. The cry was that labourers were flocking into the towns. Perhaps some Unions were apt to overdo this repayment of relief, with the result that young labourers were disposed to migrate into the towns. This must be regarded as an element of the question; they ought to be kept on the land and made into good citizens. (Cheers.)

Mr J. PETRIE (Holywell) thought that the last speaker had covered the whole ground, and rose to call attention to a paragraph in a morning paper referring to a Board of Guardians represented at the Conference—Ruthin—which was criticised for its increase of pauperism as being disgraceful. It would be interesting to know if this version of the Ruthin administration were correct. Personally, he knew of several Unions in Wales where the pauperism was decreasing considerably. This question of the maintenance of

parents by their children revealed the seamy side of Poor Law administration, and was really depressing. Children who were so lost to self-respect as had been described deserved punishment. The whole thing was summed up in utter selfishness. If people thought more about others and less about themselves the difficulty would be in the way of removal.

Mr JONES (Ruthin) replying to the last speaker, said he had not seen the severe report referred to, but the Ruthin Guardians take a great deal of trouble to get at the children of the dependent poor. He believed they were as careful as any Board, and was sorry Ruthin had been singled out in this way for criticism.

Mrs ELIAS (Holyhead) observed that Boards of Guardians were fully conversant with this matter, and scarcely a meeting passed without a case coming up. As to what Mr Thomas had said, her Board would not give 4s., but would start with 2s., and very little was given to the able-bodied. There was a great deal of truth in what Mr Hugh Pritchard had said. Children were brought up with the idea that everything was to be done for them, that they forgot to think of their own responsibilities, while they spent their money on football, bicycles, and other pastimes.

Mr JOB OWEN (Carnarvon) endorsed what had been said as to the excellence of the paper, and explained that the matter raised was felt to be of great importance in Carnarvon. It would be a pity if the excellent paper were allowed to drop with that meeting, and felt something should be done to circulate it, so that sons and daughters should be made acquainted with their liabilities. He did not think children of the present generation were more wanting in filial feeling than the children of previous generations, but rather that the nation had grown up under erroneous beliefs that their responsibilities were taken over by Boards of Guardians. That was the root of the evil, and as a remedy he urged that a report of the proceedings should be widely circulated. The children required educating on this question.

Mr W. R. ROBERTS (Llanfyllin) did not think that it was all the fault of education or that the evil was confined to the poorest classes, for he knew of a schoolmaster in a good position, and a son in Chester in a good business, who both refused to contribute anything towards the maintenance of their parents. Happily these men were compelled to pay. On the other hand he knew of many farm hands earning only 14s. and 15s. a week who sacrificed 1s. a week for the maintenance of their parents. Reference had been made to keeping the labourers on the soil, but what could be expected when they were paid such miserable wages and indifferent treatment from the farmers? They could not expect to keep the labourers on the soil, and they wanted to get to the root of the evil. He shuddered to think that some of his countrymen could be so callous as had been described, and quite agreed that something should be done to compel them to contribute to the support of those who had nourished and nursed them.

Mr HUGH THOMAS (Bangor) urged that consideration should be given to another aspect of the question, viz., the relationship of parents and children. It would generally be found that it was those children who had been carelessly brought up who refused to pay, those who held their parents in disrespect and disobeyed them. Early training had much to do with the issue.

Mr C. A. JONES, replying to the debate, said he was much obliged to the Conference for so earnestly debating the question he had introduced. The object of the paper was to provoke discussion, and that object had been attained. His Board did not take proceedings unless compelled, believing that persuasion was better than force, and the circumstances of each case had to be considered. Prosecution very often had the effect of setting a child against the parent and creating ill-feeling. Mr Harding Roberts had mentioned that he was wrong in his law. He had certainly only quoted the Act of Elizabeth, but he had taken care to say that that law had been altered, though he had not specified the alteration. He agreed that payments to parents by way of relief should not be made to children, and doubtless when relieving officers find the practice was objected to they would discontinue it. He did not know how far it was practised, but it was, anyhow, a bad practice. No doubt if children were brought up in the Poor Law atmosphere, sooner or later they would think they were entitled to the same relief as their parents. Children were legally responsible to maintain their parents whether they received indoor or outdoor relief. As to publicity being given to the proceedings, this rested with Boards of Guardians, he thought, and he had no doubt that Guardians and relieving officers would endeavour to make the matter widely known that children are liable to maintain their parents.

VOTES OF THANKS.

Mr S. JONES (Wrexham) moved a hearty vote of thanks to the Mayor and Corporation of Carnarvon for the use of the Guildhall, and expressed the indebtedness of the delegates for the kindness and hospitality which had been extended to them.

Mr WILLIAMS seconded, and the motion was carried with applause.

The PRESIDENT briefly acknowledged the compliment.

Mr W. M. ROBERTS moved a vote of thanks to the readers of the papers, which, he said, had not only been valuable in themselves but had led to practical and useful discussions.

Mr A. H. RICHARDS seconded the motion, which was carried by acclamation.

Rev. A. R. ALSOP acknowledged the vote.

Mr JAMES PRINCE moved a hearty vote of thanks to the President for his services in the chair. He said they had had several Presidents who had said more on those occasions, but they

never had a President who had done more. It would encourage Board of Guardians in their work to know that Mr Darbishire had thus associated himself with them, while they were very glad to know that Mrs Darbishire was doing such an excellent work in Carnarvon. What surprised them all was that under the circumstances Carnarvon should be so backward in regard to lady Guardians, and he was sure that if Mrs Darbishire would consent to serve she would head the poll. (Cheers.)

Mr JONES (Ruthin) seconded the motion, which was carried amid loud cheers.

Mr W. A. DARBISHIRE, in acknowledgment, said that what he had heard had made him feel thankful they had given him the opportunity of presiding over the Conference, and be of some little use. He had acquired one piece of knowledge at any rate, viz., that if he ever came upon the rates he could make his wife pay for him. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr HUGH THOMAS proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Simon Jones, Chairman of the Conference Committee, and Mr P. Harding Roberts, the Honorary Secretary, and congratulated those responsible for the arrangements upon the complete success of the Conference. To Mr Harding Roberts their thanks were specially due. (Applause.)

Mr JOB OWEN seconded, and the motion was agreed to with applause.

Mr SIMON JONES formally acknowledged the compliment, as also did

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS, who said that while he took a great personal interest in the Annual Conference, and was pleased at the success achieved, they must not forget that much was due to the kindness and hospitality of their Carnarvon friends, who had entered so thoroughly into the arrangements, with the result that everything had passed off without a hitch. It was gratifying to him to know that the Conference had been not only a success, but was likely to have useful and practical results.

The Conference then terminated.

The Mayor of Carnarvon entertained the delegates to lunch at the Royal, Sportsman, and Commercial Hotels, and afterwards they were driven to Vaynol Park, where a garden party was given by Mr and Mrs Assheton Smith. During the day the delegates were also able to inspect the historic Carnarvon Castle. The Committee having charge of the local arrangements were—Chairman, Mr Humphrey Williams; Messrs Eames, W. M. Roberts, F. Lloyd, T. G. Jones; with Mr R. Raneleigh Jones as Honorary Secretary.



North-Western District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE NORTH-WESTERN DISTRICT (COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF CHESHIRE AND LANCASHIRE),
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, CHESTER, ON THE
21ST AND 22ND SEPTEMBER 1906.

President—RT. HON. SIR JOHN T. HIBBERT, K.C.B.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE—
Titterington, Rev. W.
Heyes, Thomas.
Platt, Thomas.
Partington, G. H. (Clerk).

BARROW-IN-FURNESS—
Cannon, J.
Brittan, H.
Taylor, F. W. (Assistant Clerk).

BARTON-ON-IRWELL—
Gibbon, James (Vice-Chairman).
Everett, Rev. E. R.
Whitworth, J. W. (Clerk).

BIRKENHEAD—
Pierce, Dr W. A. (Chairman).
Warman, Rev. F. S. Guy (Vice-Chair.)
Bulley, T. Raffles.
Carter, John (Clerk).

BLACKBURN—
Ashworth, Thos.
Brooks, Albert.
Bygrave, C. E. (Clerk).

BOLTON—
Knott, Percy (Vice-Chairman).
Bowling, J.
Haslam, J. P.
Cooper, H. I. (Clerk).

BUCKLOW—
Cort, Rev. J. P. (Chairman).
Brown, Miss.
Leigh, George (Clerk).

BURNLEY—
Webster, Charles (Chairman).
Horn, J. S. (Clerk).

BURY—
Linfield, Rev. R. P. (Chairman).
Healey, D. (Vice-Chairman).
Isherwood, J. (Clerk).

CHESTER—
Nixon, T. (Vice-Chairman).
Vernon, W.
Douglas, Mrs.
Tarnock, W. (Clerk).

CHORLEY—
Burwell, W. W. (Chairman).
Dickinson, Henry (Vice-Chairman).
Crompton, A.
Unsworth, R.

CHORLTON—
Sarjeant, J. W. (Chairman).
Rhodes, Dr J. M.
Hertz, Miss Olga.
Greenhalgh, L. W. (Assistant Clerk).

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued.*

FYLD—

Gill, J.
 Richardson, J.
 Crossfield, W. P.
 Webber, Mrs.
 Johnson, Miss.
 Brown, Fred. H. (Clerk).

GARSTANG—

Gardner, Rev. J. Cardwell (Vice-Chairman).
 Escolme, John.
 Thornton, Charles (Clerk).

HASLINGDEN—

Woodcock, T.
 Worsley, N.
 Heap, L.
 Haworth, G.
 Sinkinson, J. H. (Clerk).

LANCASTER—

Howson, J. R.
 Jemmison, H.
 Metcalfe, Miss A. E.
 Barrow, Mrs J. D.
 Ball, W. D. (Clerk).

LEEK—

Simpson, John.
 Bratt, Joseph.
 Walker, E. J.
 Shaw, J. Morris (Clerk).

LEIGH—

Karfoot, Rev. Dr (Chairman).
 Hayes, P.
 Wilton, J.
 Williams, Ernest (Clerk).

LIVERPOOL—

Roberts, W.
 Garrett, Thomas.
 Hagger, H. J. (Clerk).

MACCLESFIELD—

Bridge, Rev. Thos. (Chairman).
 Pimblott, Mrs.
 Armit, Mrs.
 May, J. F. (Clerk).

MANCHESTER—

Earnshaw, Jacob.
 Sykes, Joseph.
 Simpson, E. G.
 Macdonald, Jas. (Clerk).

NANTWICH—

Bailey, Dr E. C.
 Parton, C. E.
 Bourne, S.
 Atkinson, H. G. (Assistant Clerk).

NORTHWICH—

Hayhurst, C. F. (Chairman).
 Howett, J. J.
 Ward, E. T.
 Fletcher, E. (Clerk).

OLDHAM—

Adamson, Thos. (Chairman).
 Lees, Thomas (Vice-Chairman).
 Quarumby, H. A. (Clerk).

ORMSKIRK—

Clinning, T. O. (Chairman).
 Bowen, Mrs.
 Martland, Miss.
 Mulgrew, J.
 Dickinson, A. (Clerk).

PRESCOT—

Welsby, Geo. H. (Chairman).
 Baker, Thomas (Vice-Chairman).
 Halsall, W.
 Mann, A. F. (Clerk).

PRESTON—

Cartmell, H.
 King, Thomas.
 Ley, J. A.
 Clarke, James (Clerk).

PRESTWICH—

Sassen, Rev. W. (Chairman).
 Whittaker, N.
 Leatherbarrow, T.
 Ogden, E. W. (Clerk).

ROCHDALE—

Pardy, Richard (Chairman).
 Wareham, Rev. T. W. (Vice-Chairman).
 Leach, R. A. (Clerk).

RUNCORN—

Wright, Thos.
 Harrison, Walter.
 Whitlow, James.
 Eyes, Henry.
 Ashton, Geo. F. (Clerk).

SALFORD—

Kay, J. J. (Chairman).
 Simcock, A. (Vice-Chairman).
 Byrne, J. P.
 Hill, Samuel.
 Townson, F. A. (Clerk).

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.

TARVIN—

Barnston, Harry (Chairman).
Bate, Roger (Vice-Chairman).
Smith, R. C. (Vice-Chairman).
Bailey, H. Grant (Clerk).

TODMORDEN—

Greenwood, Thos. (Vice-Chairman).
Sutcliffe, Albert.
Hollinrake, Fred. (Clerk).

TOXTETH PARK—

Woodhall, W. E. (Vice-Chairman).
Lunt, John.

ULVERSTON—

Walker, James.
Dean, C. W. (Clerk).

WARRINGTON—

Billinge, Jacob (Chairman).
Hickman, William (Vice-Chairman).
Mather, Geo.
Sutton, Sam. (Assistant-Clerk).

WEST DERBY—

Baker, Rev. J. W. (Chairman).
Webster, W. W. (Vice-Chairman).
Cleaver, Harris P. (Clerk).

WIGAN—

Fairhurst, William (Chairman).
Taylor, John (Vice-Chairman).
Taylor, John.
Ball, Edward.

WIRRAL—

Davies, T. (Chairman).
Townsend, G. J. (Vice-Chairman).
Hannay, Mrs A.
Ollive, J. E. S. (Clerk).

VISITORS.

The Lord Bishop of Chester.
His Worship the Mayor of Chester.
Colonel G. Dixon, Chairman, Cheshire
County Council.
Jenner-Fust, H. } Local Government
Elias, W. P. } Board Inspectors.
Evans, Miss }
Barrett, W. S., Chairman, Lancashire
Asylums Board.
Chance, Sir William, Bart.

Adams, F. M., District Auditor, Che-
shire.
Macdonald, George, Manchester.
Bray, W., Liverpool
Zanetti, Miss, Chorlton.
Wakeford, Mrs, West Derby.
Batters, Mrs, Holywell.
Dean, Mrs, Ulverston.
Walker, Mrs, Ulverston.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—Clitheroe, Congleton, Lunesdale, and Stockport.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
THE INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT. By Dr J. M. RHODES, <i>Chairman, Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences</i> - -	252
THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE POOR RATE IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION. By Mr R. A. LEACH (<i>Barrister-at-Law</i>), Clerk, Rochdale Union - - -	278
THE TREATMENT OF VAGRANTS. By Sir WILLIAM CHANCE, Bart., <i>Hon. Secretary, Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences</i> - - - - -	290

FRIDAY, 21ST SEPTEMBER.

The PRESIDENT (Sir John T. Hibbert, K.C.B.), on taking the chair for the thirty-second consecutive time, was received with applause. He was supported by the Mayor of Chester (Alderman R. Lamb), the Bishop of Chester, Mr H. Jenner-Fust (Local Government Board Inspector for the North-Western District), and Colonel George Dixon, chairman of the Cheshire County Council.

The MAYOR OF CHESTER, in extending to the Conference a hearty welcome to the ancient town of Chester, reminded the delegates that this was the sixth occasion on which the North-Western Poor Law Conference had met in that city. There were many important problems connected with Poor Law administration to solve, and the utility of such gatherings had been amply proved in the past. (Applause.) He congratulated them upon having so distinguished a President, and that that President was presiding over them that day for the thirty-second occasion.

The PRESIDENT, in thanking the Mayor for his cordial welcome, agreed that there were many problems for those engaged in Poor Law work to solve. For instance, there was the question of the unemployed and the tramps, while how to reduce Poor Law expenditure constituted a problem by itself. In his own opinion, the present law was very good, although in some particulars it could be advantageously amended, but he believed that with a strict administration of the present law pauperism could be reduced. During the thirty-two years which the North-Western Conference had sat, a great improvement had taken place in local administration both in Lancashire and Cheshire, and he looked forward to still greater improvements in the future. (Applause.) He observed that all the delegates to the Conference had heard with great regret of the motor-car accident which had recently befallen the Mayor and Mayoress of Chester, and they trusted that both would have a speedy and complete recovery. (Hear, hear.)

The HON. SECRETARY (Mr H. J. Hagger) announced that letters regretting inability to attend had been received from

Mr W. Runciman, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary, Local Government Board; Sir Samuel Provis, K.C.B., Secretary, Local Government Board; Albert Pell, LL.D.; Mr W. M. Moorsom, and Mr R. I. Dansey, Local Government Board Inspector.

The PRESIDENT then addressed the Conference. He said:— This is the thirty-second occasion on which I have had to address the North-Western Conference as its President, and I need hardly say how much pleasure it gives me to meet you once more. Certainly the period is one of greater prosperity than when the Conference met last year, but although the times are prosperous I do not think

we can be quite satisfied with the state of pauperism of the country. I do not think that as much has been done in the direction of reducing pauperism as might have been the case. Now the Board of Trade returns are very interesting. The Board of Trade *Labour Gazette* says of July—"As compared with a year ago all the principal industries showed an improvement;" 21,783 in the principal trade unions were unemployed at the end of June. In August there was an improvement in the shipbuilding trade, but employment was much about the same as in June. In July there was an improvement in the shipbuilding trade, but employment was much about the same as in June—3.6 per cent. in the trade unions were unemployed as against 5.2 per cent. at the end of July 1905. In August, as is not unusual, employment was not, on the whole, said the *Labour Gazette*, quite so good as in July. The building trades and tinplate industry showed some recovery, and a considerable number of workpeople, mostly coal miners, received an advance in wages. As compared with a year ago, all the principal industries (except the boot and shoe trade) showed an improvement. Then there are the splendid returns of exports and imports, which do not show that the country is going to the dogs; but looking at the figures I think we ought to have had better results in pauperism than we appear to have had. Taking the foreign trade for June, July, and August, it will be seen that the June imports were £47,892,000, or an increase of £4,355,000 over the same month in 1905; the exports were £30,369,000, or an increase of £4,653,000 as compared with 1905. The July imports were £48,609,000, or an increase of £3,867,000, and the exports £33,442,000, or an increase of £5,621,000. The August imports were £48,894,000, an increase of £2,031,000 over 1905 and £6,454,000 over 1904; the exports were £33,492,000, or an increase over 1905 of £3,974,000 and £7,132,000 over 1904. Then if we look at the returns of the Inland Revenue Commissioners we see how the national wealth stands. The gross annual income for 1904-5 amounted to £912,000,000. Of this sum £504,500,000 came from business, professions, and employments. In ten years the net receipts of duties increased by £23,000,000, while there was a decrease in the value of land in the same period of £1,163,000. Business, professions, and employments showed an increase of £147,948,000 in those ten years, and of this sum Lancashire's share was £12,678,000. These are very striking figures, but now let us compare them with the statistics of pauperism. The pauperism of England and Wales on 1st January 1906 was—men, women, and children, 802,068; insane, &c., 108,629; casual paupers, 16,823—total, 926,741; or London 148,629, outside London 778,112; this being a decrease of 5,526, or 0.6 per cent. of the total number relieved during the year. The proportion per 1,000 of population of paupers relieved 1st January 1906 was 27.1, or 1 in 37; in 1st January 1905 it was 27.6 per 1,000, or 1 in 36; 68.5 per cent. of the number relieved

were heads of families and persons relieved singly, and 31.5 per cent. were dependants. The indoor poor were 279,037, or an increase over 1905 of 5,651; outdoor poor, 562,622, or a decrease of 12,951. The insane showed an increase of 2,267. There was an increase in 367 Unions of 22,815 persons, and a decrease in 273 Unions of 28,341 persons, showing the decrease of 5,526. The decrease was due to the diminished number of paupers in the Unions in which the increase in the few preceding years had been most pronounced, such as West Ham, Walsall, Croydon, Rochdale, Bury, Oldham, Burnley, and Salford. The increase of pauperism occurred in the four years 1900 to 1904, and in 1905 until December, when a decrease began. Among the Unions showing the greatest increase were five Lancashire Unions, but there was no serious increase in Cheshire. When an increase of pauperism takes place, like that experienced during the Boer War, it takes a long while to get the paupers off the lists again. This means that we must have strict administration, and Guardians must overcome their warmth of heart for the purpose of suggesting thrift and carefulness among the different populations with which they have to deal. A satisfactory feature is the decrease in what is called the able-bodied class of paupers. Classified, the pauperism was as follows:—Men, 25.1 per 1,000 of the adult male population; female, 34.2 per 1,000 of adult female population; and children, 20.1 of population under sixteen. There was an increase of 2,747 persons in infirm wards and infirmaries; able-bodied totalled 126,730, or a decrease of 5,950, and not able-bodied numbered 435,438, an increase of 6,966. The pauperism on 21st July 1906 was, indoor 233,000, outdoor 513,000, or 747,000—21.6 per 1,000, as compared with 1866—indoor 120,000, outdoor 716,000, total 836,000, or 39.1 per 1,000. In 1905 the figures were 231,965 indoor, 519,404 outdoor—total, 751,369, thus showing a decrease of 4,265 for 1906 as compared with 1905. In Cheshire the figures were—1905, 14,458; 1906, 14,389, or a decrease of 69; Lancashire—1905, 77,043; 1906, 65,555, or a decrease of 11,488. There is thus hope still, and I think things are improving month by month. With regard to the children, I believe in the boarding-out system, and also in Cottage Homes, but while the Cottage Home system is an expensive one, the children get more home training. Naturally there is thus a better chance of their becoming good citizens, or, at any rate, better-off citizens. With respect to the education of the children in the Workhouses, nearly all of them go to the elementary schools of the different localities. This, I think, is a very good thing, and is better for the children in every way. With regard to expenditure on Poor Law relief, this amounted in the year ending Lady Day 1905 to £13,851,000, which is the largest amount we have ever had to pay since the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act. I do not find fault with it so long as it is not paid extravagantly in out-relief. So long as it is spent for the most part in providing infirmaries I think we are doing

something to reduce pauperism in that way, and there is hope that it will go on increasing year by year as it has done in the past. In-maintenance cost £3,174,000, out-relief £3,265,000, insane £2,333,000, buildings, furniture, rates, and taxes £1,178,000, loan charges £1,133,000, and other expenses £874,000. The charge is at the rate of 8s. 2½d. per head of population, being 2d. per head higher than in the previous year, and a higher charge than in any former year. The establishment of infirmaries helps to reduce pauperism by enabling men and women to improve in health and return to their usual avocations. I think the money thus spent on Workhouses and infirmaries is well spent, and is carrying out the original intention of the Poor Laws. The amount of the expenditure borne by rates is £10,474,000, that is deducting grants and other payments amounting to £3,300,000. In Lancashire the expenditure on relief was 1s. 8d. for in-maintenance, 1s. 0½d. for out-relief, or 6s. 1¾d. altogether; in Cheshire 1s. 3¾d. for in-maintenance, 1s. 7½d. out-relief, or a total of 5s. 10½d. Mr Jenner-Fust's return for Lancashire shows the number of paupers returned on 1st January 1906, and the average number returned on the same day for five years, viz., January 1906, indoor and outdoor 87,573, average for five years 81,781, or an increase of 5,792, of whom 3,146 were indoor and 2,646 were outdoor; the lunatics in asylums numbered in January 1906 10,493, against an average of 9,469, or an increase of 1,024. The proportion of paupers to census population has changed from 1 in 54 to 1 in 50.7. Twenty-three Unions show an increase and seven a decrease, viz., Ashton, Burnley, Bury, Clitheroe, Lunesdale, Oldham, and Rochdale. The cost of in-maintenance and out-relief in the thirty Lancashire Unions on 1st January 1906 was £636,961, against an average for five years of £587,898, or an increase of £49,073, rising from 6d. in the £ to 6½d. in the £, but in the four Unions of Ashton, Clitheroe, Lunesdale, and Manchester the cost was less; in the twenty-six others the cost is greater. Comparing the pauperism of Lancashire and London, the estimated population of London is 4,684,000, Lancashire 4,657,000; the pauperism of London, 1901, 123,500, or 27.4 per 1,000; 1905, 148,000, or 31.8; 1906, 148,600, or 31.7; Lancashire, 83,027, or 18.2, in 1901; 101,300, or 22.8, in 1905; 98,000, or 21.5, in 1906; so that after all Lancashire has some credit to its account; but with regard to the inmates of the asylums Lancashire showed a great increase. In January last there were 10,493 lunatics in their asylums, the average for the five previous years being 9,469. But Cheshire pauperism was not a serious factor so far as increase went. I think that Mr Dansey's return for the Cheshire Unions will be interesting. On 1st January 1906 the total indoor and outdoor poor was 16,566, average for five years 15,769, or an increase of 797—the indoor increase being 446 and the outdoor 351; lunatics in asylums 1,841, five years' average 1,697, or an increase of 144. The proportion of paupers to

census population was 1 in 47.8 on 1st January 1906 and 1 in 50.3 during the five years' average. Nine Unions showed an increase and three a decrease, viz., Macclesfield, Northwich, and Tarvin. Bucklow was 1 in 76, and Congleton and Hawarden 1 in 32; ten were more and two (Runcorn and Tarvin) less. The cost of indoor and outdoor relief was on January 1906, £126,795, against £115,557 average for five years, or an increase of £11,238, the amount being 6d. to 6½d. in the £. Now I come to the serious and important question of the increase in insanity. First let me give you the figures. The insane in England and Wales on 1st January 1906 was 108,629, or an increase of 2,267 over 1905. Of these, 11,160, or 13 per cent., were in Workhouses, and only 3,000, or 1 per cent., were in London. The number of insane relieved was 11 per cent. of pauperism in England and Wales, and in London 16.6 per cent. The insane in asylums in 1872 was 29,091, in Workhouses and elsewhere 20,895, total 49,986; in asylums in 1906 85,821, in Workhouses 22,808, total 108,629. The population increased from 22,788,000 in 1872 to 34,152,000 in 1906. The number of insane in asylums per 1,000 of the population in 1882 was 1.6, in 1906 2.5. On 1st January 1906 there was an increase of 2,158 over 1905; 2,630, 1905 over 1904; 3,235, 1904 over 1903; 3,251, 1903 over 1902; the average increase for ten years 2,554; average increase for five years 2,807. Thus the increase for 1905 was 404 less than the ten years' average, and 657 than the five years' average. The pauper patients were 111,256, being 91.2 per cent. In forty counties there was an increase of 1,360 certified insane, and in twenty counties a decrease of 166. London had the largest increase. Middlesex, Essex, Kent, and Surrey also showed an increase. In fifty-four county boroughs there was an increase of 769, and in fourteen a decrease of 109. The actual rise of the insane has been from 1 in 314 in 1897 to 1 in 283 in 1906, a period of nine years. The increase of the population has been 10.8 per cent., and 22.7 per cent. increase of insane under care. But I wish to point out that this does not necessarily mean that there has been a real increase of insanity. Personally I do not feel that there is a very large increase in insanity, and the statistics show that the increase is not so rapid as it formerly was. There has been a decline in the death rate from 10.26 to 8.87. Of the number discharged in London during ten years ending December 1904, 25.78 had been readmitted up to March 1905, and one-half within twelve months of discharge. Of the males married the percentage was 47.3, and widowed 9.9; females married, 45.0 per cent., and widowed 16.6. When we come to the causes of insanity we have to pay regard to modern conditions, and doubtless mental anxiety, even in our amusements, such as motoring and cycling, must be taken into account. As to the causes of insanity among the pauper population we note the following—religious excitement (males 1.2, females 1.5); mental anxiety or "worry" (males 4.2, females 5.1); intemperance in drink (males 23.3, females 9.3); hereditary influence

(males 19.2, females 24.6); old age (males 7.7, females 8.9); and privation (males 7.7, females, 8.9). The returns show 7.7 per cent. as the proportion of those suffering from epilepsy (males 9 against females 6.4). When we consider senile decay it must not be forgotten that people live longer than they used to do through improved sanitation and a variety of other causes. Of course, in dealing with mental disease, people can do a great deal to help themselves and to prevent the growth of insanity. We need not live in a continual state of excitement and fluster, and an endeavour must be made to still further improve the homes of the people and their physical condition. Great improvements have been made within the last half-century, but much more still remains to be done. All these suggestions should be well weighed, and hasty conclusions ought to be avoided, especially in the direction of prohibiting the marriage of persons who have been in lunatic asylums. Extremes in any direction are not to be commended, and it is not to be forgotten in mental diseases that one day a man may be sane and the next day he might be quite insane, or *vice versa*; and much greater knowledge of the whole subject of mental disorder is required before we can regard ourselves justified in interfering with the liberty of the subject as some enthusiasts propose. The greater care of the mentally defective and the improved methods adopted in institutions have all had their influence upon the statistics, so that we need not necessarily from the figures conclude that in this country there has been a great increase of insanity. In conclusion, I think I ought to say a word in regard to the unemployed, a question which is before the public in an unmistakable fashion. I may quote from the *Westminster Gazette*, which on 20th July last said: "All along the line we find serious people deeply impressed with the danger of turning the 'unemployed' into the 'unemployable' if we adopt any measure, whether it is out-relief or farm colony, which will draw men of weaker will out of the main stream of industry. The problem demands more brains, more intelligence, than we have yet put into it. Legislation, when it comes, should deal drastically with that part of the existing system which manufactures paupers and vagrants, and bear more hardly than the present law on the class which refuses to work." I remember the late Professor Fawcett saying once, "You may have as many paupers as you choose to pay for." No truer words were ever spoken, and I say you may have as many unemployed as you care to pay for. We can all agree with the words of the *Westminster Gazette*, which show how the problem is regarded by many responsible people in this country. We have the coming winter before us, and it may be necessary to give a large measure of relief. I sincerely hope that will not be the case. There is a large class of unemployed with whom we must have the greatest feelings of sympathy, but there is a larger class still which in the public interest and on public grounds must be dealt with more or less in a drastic manner. I

have to thank the Conference for the attention it has given to my observations. (Loud applause.)

Dr MILSON RHODES (Chairman, Central Committee Poor Law Conferences) read the following paper :—

INFANTILE MORTALITY.

By J. MILSON RHODES, M.D., J.P.,

President étranger Congress International d'Assistance Publique et Privée; Chairman of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

HEROD killed his thousands once, we English people kill more than a hundred thousand infants every year, and flatter ourselves by thinking that we are the finest nation under the sun.

If we can only make the public understand the causes of this terrible slaughter, then, and not before, shall we have an adequate effort made to remove those powerful subjective and objective causes, the effects of which are so disastrous to the health of the children of England, not only to those who die, but also to those who survive. No one knows better than I do the disastrous effects of improper feeding, and how widespread is the ignorance as to what is the proper food for an infant if it cannot be fed as Nature intended. When I was writing this paper I asked fifty mill girls how they would feed a baby three months old if its mother had gone away. Only one said milk, and two milk water, all the rest were entirely wrong.

There is, however, one thing in regard to this question of bad feeding. We know that bad feeding goes on all the year round; that diarrhœa is the disease that results most frequently from improper food, and therefore if it was only the character of the food, the mortality should show some relation to uniformity. If you turn to Dr Sargeant's excellent reports of last year on the health of the County Palatine, and Dr Niven's also excellent report upon the health of Man-

chester, you find some amazing figures, as the following table shows :—

DEATHS FROM DIARRHŒA.

	Lancashire.	Manchester.
First Quarter - -	46	45
Second Quarter - -	65	52
Third Quarter - -	914	559
Fourth Quarter - -	197	111

In both the mortality rises during the third quarter, like the Blackpool tower, and falls again in the last quarter. As the deaths from diarrhœa number upwards of 20,000 per annum, the vast majority of which occur among infants, it is an important part of the question—to my mind it proves that not only is the character of the food wrong, but also that the condition of the food, when given to the child, is much worse during the third quarter. We must not shut our eyes to the enormous importance of bad food, neither must we shut our eyes to the other causes which play so important a part in producing such disastrous results.

It may be as well to glance over Europe and see where the causes are most powerfully at work. The chart shows the mortality of children under one year of age per 1,000 births. The mortality in Prussia, Hungary, Austria, and Russia ranges from 195 to 269. That a well-educated nation like the Germans, of whom 99 per cent. can write, should have a mortality only exceeded by three of the great countries of Europe, and higher than that of thirteen, proves that there is something rotten in the state of Germany. A high state of education is usually associated with a low infantile mortality, as we shall see to be the case in England later on, but Germany is an exception.

In Western Europe you have France, Belgium,

Holland, Italy, Spain, with variations from 146 to 190. In Northern Europe you have variations from 95 in Norway, and 98 in Sweden, to 128 in England and Wales. If you take the infantile mortality in the years 1898 to 1903, England has a higher mortality than Holland, Switzerland, Denmark, Scotland, Ireland, Sweden, and Norway—we certainly do not occupy the premier position in this question.

“Wake up, England,” said H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, when he returned from his trip across the Atlantic, and it is time that we did wake up and realise that in that Greater Britain beyond the seas, they have made greater progress than we have in reducing their infantile mortality. In the Buff-book for Australia I find that the infantile mortality in the Commonwealth is 103.98, in New Zealand 78.52, just about half what it is in Lancashire to-day. It is not, however, the land of the Southern Cross we have to consider, we must come nearer home, and consider for a moment where the malign influences, the result of which is this awful holocaust, are most active.

The first objective cause is the changed condition under which the people are housed. In 1891 eleven millions of the people of England lived in the rural districts. The last census showed that this number had sunk to seven millions. In the same period the urban population had risen from seventeen to twenty-five millions. Some of this apparent increase is no doubt due to the desire of the cities to make wide their borders, but a very large part of it is due to the flocking of young people to the towns to seek their fortunes, or, as they say, to go where there is “more life.”

If you look over Table II. you see at once that all the counties having a mortality of less than 100 per thousand births are agricultural; on the other hand, all the counties with a mortality of upwards of 130 are mining or manufacturing, or both mining and manu-

facturing (Stafford and Lancashire). Another fact that the table shows in column two, is that the birth rate only rises once above 26 in the fifteen counties, with a mortality of less than 10 per cent.; in the twelve counties over it is never as low as 26, in five it is over 30, in South Wales it reaches 32.2, and in Durham no less than 33.8.

You find this close relationship between a high infantile mortality and a high birth rate is usual. It is more marked if a comparison is made between some of the other countries of Europe than in England, *e.g.* :—

	Infantile Mortality.	Birth Rate.
Ireland - - -	96	23.7
Norway - - -	96	30.6
Hungary - - -	256	41.1
Russia - - -	269	47.1

If choice must be made between a high or a low birth and death rate, I should, without hesitation, choose the latter. That there is an enormous amount of physical and mental degeneration going on I do not for one moment believe, but it is difficult to imagine anything more likely to produce a stunted dwarfed humanity, mentally and physically, than the frequent pregnancies of the mothers of these unfortunate infants bound to die.

There is another fact that Table II. discloses, and that is that a low ratio of infantile mortality is associated with a high ratio of education amongst the women of the nation. If you again take for comparison the fifteen counties with the lowest and highest mortality, you find that in the former the mortality only four times exceeds 20, in two cases sinks as low as 8 per cent., in the latter the illiterates are over 30 in eight cases, and over 40 in two.

The same state of the case appears to hold good in Europe, as appears from the following :—

TABLE I.

	Infantile Mortality.	Adults Unable to Write.
Norway - - -	91	1
Sweden - - -	98	1
Ireland - - -	104	15
Scotland - - -	127	3
Denmark - - -	131	—
Switzerland - - -	141	1
Holland - - -	146	10
England - - -	150	4
France - - -	154	5
Belgium - - -	157	17
Italy - - -	168	44
Spain - - -	190	58
Prussia - - -	195	1
Hungary - - -	213	—
Austria - - -	223	31
Russia - - -	269	78

They are not perhaps altogether conclusive, but there is very fair ground for thinking that ignorance and infantile mortality travel together (Table I.). There is one other fact that deserves the careful consideration of those about to marry, and that is the effect that women marrying before attaining their majority has upon the infantile mortality of England (Table II.). A glance at column four shows that in the counties of England with a mortality under the average, the number of ignorant women varies from 110 to 190 in the fourteen over from 150 to 249, 50 per cent. of the latter are over 200. In my opinion this high mortality is only what we might expect from these boy and girl marriages amongst the unskilled classes, a small amount of education associated with small wages and bad housing, with the disastrous results that we see only too plainly by referring to Table II.

The housing of the working classes of this country will have to be altered, if only for the children's sake, for I am certain that it is playing a very important part in the production of a high infantile mortality. If you take Dr Sargeant's report and the census return, and classify those urban districts having an infantile mortality of under 100 and over 200, and then refer to the Lancashire Census Return as to the number of tenement houses of five rooms or under, you find that in the former case you have about 27 per cent., in the latter case 70 per cent. It is not only the number of rooms that is deficient, you know as well as I do that the rooms in these small dwellings are smaller than the rooms in higher rented houses. The consequence of course is that each inhabitant has less cubic air space, a specially important matter when you remember that there are plenty of houses where not only are the windows not kept open at night but are not even made to open. I am quite aware that small houses are usually associated with a small income and the privations incidental thereto, but when you remember that the ratio of infantile mortality is lowest in counties like Wilts and Dorset, it is evident that infantile mortality does not depend entirely upon the income.

There is one part of this housing question which should receive instant attention from the administrative authorities, and that is the immediate abolition of those abominations, the old-fashioned privy and the almost equally disgusting pail closet.

A great many people who have the good fortune to live in comfortable houses have an idea that these insanitary conveniences have been done away with in our great cities. In Manchester, I am sorry to say, it is not so, as the following figures prove :—

Water closets,	-	67,638	Pail closets,	-	65,477
			Midden privies,	-	19,262
			Wet middens,		10,049
					94,788

It is time the Corporation were doing something, but at the rate they are doing it, it will be about a quarter of a century before these diarrhœa promoters are done away with.

I am certain these insanitary arrangements have a pernicious influence on infantile life, as the following statistics go a long way to prove :—

District.	Infantile Mortality per 1,000 Births.	Old-fashioned Latrines per cent.
Crumpsall - - -	112	35
Rusholme - - -	126	26
Blackley - - -	137	59
Moston - - -	166	27
Harpurhey - - -	179	29
Clayton - - -	180	27
Manchester, Tainsby -	184	66
Newton - - -	187	66
Bradford - - -	187	71
Gorton - - -	198	60
Openshaw - - -	205	62

It is evident that, as a rule, a high ratio of infantile mortality and a high percentage of pail closets are in Manchester found together. Blackley appears an exception, but it has only a very sparse population, five people to an acre. Harpurhey and Clayton also appear to be exceptions in the other direction, but I think they are the exceptions that prove the rule, for I find that from the report that the amount of dry ashes, street sweepings, bell dust, and occasionally dry middens deposited in those two townships amounts to a hundred thousand tons per annum, or a hundred and twenty-five tons to the acre. I believe both the pail closets and tips play an important part in producing that dreadful scourge of infant life, diarrhœa, and when I say that more than twenty thousand children die annually from that one disease, I think you will agree that the term

dreadful is not too strong. The average infantile mortality in England and Wales from diarrhœa was 33 per thousand births, in Wilts and Dorset it was only 10, but in Lancashire it was 50, a ratio only exceeded in one county, that of Northumberland. (May I remark in passing that our Cheshire friends stand in a better position than we do, though they have nothing to boast of, as their infantile mortality is 122.) It is monstrous that we should continue to allow thousands of infants to be sacrificed to Moloch on the altar of insanitation by the slum owner and the property jobber.

Our mortality from diarrhœa in Lancashire is five times as great as it is in the agricultural counties of Wilts and Dorset, and that, I think, is very good reason why we should take an interest in the researches that are now being carried out by Professor Delspini at Victoria and also at Harvard Universities, as to the causes of this enormous mortality.

I believe that the old-fashioned privies, and the millions of flies that are bred in them, are two of the most powerful causes, the effects of which we see in the death rate from diarrhœa.

There are many experts for whose opinion I have the greatest possible respect, who believe that the milk supply in the great towns is the primary cause. That the state of the milk when the child receives it is the cause, I acknowledge, but that the state of the milk when it arrives at the railway milk depot, and when it is given to the child are the same, I deny. I am quite aware that there are dirty shippens, dirty cows, dirty cowmen, dirty water to wash the cans, but from inquiries I have made from the transit agents at the depots, I find that there is no difference between the milk supply of the patrician and the plebeian—the quality of the milk, though no doubt it contains many things it ought not, is practically uniform, therefore the diarrhœa produced by milk should be uniform too. Let us see how Manchester stands. The city is divided into three divisions for

statistical purposes, and the ratio of mortality from diarrhoea is as follows :—

Character of Resident,	Death Rate from Diarrhoea.
I. Working class chiefly - - -	47.7
II. Working and middle class - - -	31.3
III. Working middle and well-to-do - - -	22.5

In the subdivisions the mortality varies from 3.5 in one thickly populated part built under the more recent orders of the Local Government Board, and 3.8 in one rural district with a population of 5 to the acre to 52.4 in one of the poorest class divisions.

It is not only the deaths from diarrhoea, it is the cases of sickness from this cause that we have to think about, and to arrive at the totals you must multiply by 20. Diarrhoea plays a very important part in placing the County Palatine in the miserable position it occupies ; how bad that position is a comparison with overcrowded London clearly proves :—

	Population.	Death from Diarrhoea.	Death of Infants under 1 year of age.	Death of Infants under 1 year per 1,000 lives.
London -	4,684,794	3,356	16,617	131
Lancashire -	4,657,638	4,269	19,052	147

Things are even worse in the great towns. The average mortality in the seventy-six great towns of England was 83. In the County Palatine we have only four towns below the average, and ten above.

Under the Average.	Over the Average.	
Barrow - .33	St Helens - .95	Liverpool - 1.35
Rochdale - .46	Bolton - 1.05	Preston - 1.32
Blackburn - .64	Manchester - 1.15	Burnley - 1.37
Oldham - .72	Warrington - 1.19	Bootle - 1.52
Bury - .79	Salford - 1.21	Wigan - 1.68

Some people appear to think, judging from their neglect to remedy the evil causes, that this high infantile mortality is unavoidable. Places like Port Sunlight, Bournville, and Creuzot prove that progress can be made in manufacturing processes, without that progress being a car of Juggernaut, but if you want your children to live you must mete out the same measure to the slum owner as you would to the Chicago meat packers, and take care that if he does make money what he makes it out of shall not be deleterious to the purchasers: That the present cribbed, cabined, and confined houses are a danger to the working classes can be very easily demonstrated.

In 1894, 1895, and 1899 my colleague, M. Andre Schnitzler, of Lausanne, prepared three reports on the relation of the housing of the working classes to infantile mortality, and produced the following striking figures :—

Class.	Cubic Air Space Metres.	Infantile Mor- tality per 1,000 Inhabitants.
I. Working class in rural districts	29.9	2.19
II. Working class in urban districts	31.0	5.56
III. Working and commercial class in urban districts - - -	33.4	2.6
IV. Working and commercial class in rural districts - - -	58.9	1.91
V. Well-to-do class in rural districts	68.8	0.19

I believe exactly the same cause is at work here, and producing the same effects. Dr Sargeant in his report gives examples, districts with high and low rate of infantile mortality.

	Mortality per 1,000 Births.	Houses.	Tenements of less than Five Rooms.
HIGH.			
Farnworth - - -	262	5,335	3,225
Trawden - - -	232	620	320
Pemberton - - -	230	4,096	2,622
Kirsby - - -	229	1,889	1,241
Low.			
Rainford - - -	68	658	337
Little Woolton - -	58	221	77
Clitheroe Rural - -	54	1,440	453
Allerton - - -	33	197	14
Childwall - - -	—	37	12

Trawden and Rainford are no doubt not well marked examples, but there is, in my opinion, a *prima facie* case for inquiry.

We require, if we are to hold our own, not only quantity but quality, and so long as we continue to allow our working classes to be housed under atmospheric conditions that would not be tolerated in a decent stable, so long must a progeny of puny, stunted, dwarfed humanity, mentally and physically, result.

Think what are the conditions under which the great mass of the labouring classes exist at the present time. The last census shows that of the 7 million houses in England and Wales more than $3\frac{1}{4}$ millions have four rooms or less. More than 145,000 houses, two-roomed houses, were occupied by families numbering from five to "twelve or more." How can child-life exist under such conditions in our cities and boroughs. The miserable small rooms, the privy close to the kitchen door, the cramped-up yard enclosed with a high wall so that the wind can never blow properly through, the back yard becomes simply an atmospheric cess-pit fouler than the mud of the gutter.

Dr Ballard long ago pointed out that when the

ground temperature at a depth of four feet rises above 56° the infantile mortality follows suit, and *vice versa*. Now this fact has a very close connection with infantile diarrhoea.

When the hot weather comes the flies breed in the privies and on the filthy floors of the pail closets, and crawl over the excreta, and then with legs as filthy as a night soil scavenger's, they probably turn in at the next door—the kitchen door—and, so to speak, proceed to wash their faces and feet in the children's milk bowls. The mischief flies and other foul insects do is no longer a matter of conjecture, it is a matter of fact, and the sooner we realise that and take steps to do away with their breeding grounds the better for the health of the child. In my opinion every owner of cottage property in the towns who has houses with these abominations, and every administrative body that allows them to continue, is *particeps criminis* in this slaughter of the innocents.

Now comes the important part of our subject—Where are these objective causes most in evidence? Thirteen counties had a mortality over the average, viz. :—Derby, 129; Leicester, 132; Carmarthen, 133; Anglesey, 134; Warwick, 136; Northumberland, 137; Notts, 137; Monmouth, 144; Stafford, 146; Lancashire, 147; Merioneth, 149; Durham, 153; Glamorgan, 156. It is at once evident that it is in the mining and manufactory districts that the highest mortality is reached. Bad as the figures are, we have worse in our own north-western districts, *e.g.* :—Salford, 148; Oldham, 150; Preston, 154; Manchester, 157; Wigan, 164; Bolton, 167; Stockport, 168; Burnley, 173; Stalybridge, 177; Congleton, 184; Hyde, 191; Dukinfield, 196; Gorton, 199; Little Hulton, 200; Middleton, 201; Padiham, 222; Pemberton, 230; and Farnworth, 262. The last has a mortality almost as high as Russia; as the infant mortality has been over 200 for the last ten years, there is evidently a fine field

there for the study of the causes of infantile mortality. We might go on discussing the water supply. There are still courts in Manchester where the stand pipe that supplies the court is placed next to the midden, and you can imagine how that water is contaminated as soon as drawn. There are other objective causes, but I want to say something about the subjective causes. The most powerful is no doubt the neglect of mothers to feed their children as nature meant them to; next is the condition of the milk when the child receives it. Milk deteriorates rapidly; Drs Park and Holt of New York have done good service by proving that in many of the working-class dwellings of New York the morning's milk had in a few hours more than four million germs in a teaspoonful of milk, and the only wonder would be if it was not so. The middle and upper class receive their milk from the can as it comes from the farm; the labouring class in many instances buy it from the milk shop, and that often means that the milk, when it arrives at the milk shop, is poured into a wide milk pan, uncovered, within a few feet or yards of a common privy—in hot weather swarming with myriads of flies—with the dust from the street settling in it; it is then carried by the purchaser, uncovered, through the streets, and placed on the table in a stuffy room, and left exposed to the air and the army of flies, then poured into an often dirty bottle with an abominable long tube; and as if that was not enough, there are, as I said just now, still plenty of courts in some of our large cities and boroughs where one stand pipe placed against the wall of the midden serves the whole court; the water is probably contaminated as soon as drawn, and when the open bucket has been standing an hour or two, it must be swarming with bacteria, and yet this is the fluid with which the children's milk is mixed. What with the flies and the atmospheric contamination of the milk, it is no wonder that the unfortunate bambino's stomach

rebels against such bad treatment, with the results you know only too well.

I should like to have said something about the inadequate clothing of babies in the cold weather, but I want to say a few words on another cause of infant mortality, and that is the want of proper inspection of all infants taken for gain. I am quite aware that we have been told *ad nauseam* by some people who ought to know better, that if we extend the Infant Life Protection Act to one-child cases, as what is called the Chorlton Bill will do as soon as it passes—and pass it we mean to—terrible things will happen, such as baby farmers refusing to take children, &c. Well, like causes produce like results? The Loi Roussell has been in force in France for thirty years, and that law says that “every child less than two years of age taken for gain, to wet nurse, wean, or nurse outside the house of his parents, shall be under the inspection of the public authorities,” and that law has produced none of the evils foretold. Spain, Italy, and some of the United States protect the single-child cases. In my opinion it is a disgrace to those two professedly philanthropic associations that they should aid and abet the slaughter of the innocents as they are doing.

The one-child case must come under inspection. There is another legal remedy which we might very well borrow from our good neighbour across the Channel, and that is Article 9 of the Public Health Law of 1902, which directs that “when during three consecutive years the number of deaths in a commune has passed the mean mortality of France, the prefect is bound to instruct the Departmental Council of Hygiene to make an inquiry into the causes of such a high rate of mortality.” If that is adopted, as I hope it will be, there will be no fear of the Public Health Committee of the County Council being out of work.

To sum up briefly I should say that the causes of infantile mortality are :—

1. The want of breast milk.
2. Improper food, not only as to the character of the food, but the condition of the food when the child receives it, to a great extent resulting from
3. The insanitary state of the houses of the working classes caused by the old-fashioned latrines.
4. The dirty condition of the houses. In some cases this is due to the pernicious custom of the mothers working in the mills from morning to night, and not having proper time to look after their houses or their children.
5. The working in the mills to the very end of pregnancy, and returning to work at the earliest possible date.
6. The use of so-called infants' foods, which are really very often infants' poisons.
7. The improper character of the infant's clothing, specially in the winter months.

And now I come to the most important part of my subject—What can be done to diminish this deplorable mortality? The administrative authorities can do much, let them make their building regulations on common-sense lines, let them see that there is sufficient air space in the rooms, let us have fewer parlours and passages and more good house places, let us do away with the horrible old privy and that diabolical invention the pail closet, and insist upon proper water-closets; we must insist on thorough sanitation in the farms, cow-sheds, water supply, cleanliness of the milker and the vessels used, thorough sanitation in the milk houses and proper protection of the milk from contamination, and we must insist upon the prohibition of the long tube feeding bottle, that awful scourge of childhood; we ought to, and I hope we shall, provide lectures for young married women expecting to become mothers, and this last is

part of what I believe is the greatest preventative of infantile mortality. In a paper read before a congress I showed how as the percentage of mothers signing by mark rose so the infantile mortality rose, and, generally speaking, the same is true throughout Europe, Germany to her shame is an exception. We must educate the future mothers of England in those elementary facts of hygiene, so that they may be worthy to be the nursing mothers of those upon whom in the days to come must rest the responsibility for the welfare of this great Empire of ours.

- a.* L'influenza dell' abilazione sulla mortalita infantile a Losanna. Andrew Schnitzler.
- b.* Revue Medicale, N. 4, 1905. M. le Dr Moray.
- c.* La mortalite infantile cause e mesuri preventive. Rapport IV. congresse Internazionale. Mr Rhodes.
- d.* Dr Vacher's Report on the Health of the County Palatine of Chalo, 1906.
- e.* Dr Sargeant's Report on the Health of the County Palatine of Lancaster.
- f.* Dr Niven's Report on the Health of Manchester.
- g.* Measures d'assistance publique contre la mortalité infantiles. Pierre Binden.
- h.* Dr Hope's Report on the Health of the City of Liverpool.

TABLE II.

	Deaths under 1 Year per 1,000 Births.	Birth Rate per 1,000 Living.	Illiterate Women per 1,000 Marriages.	Women under 21 in 1,000 Marriages, 1891 to 1900.
England and Wales	128	27.2	29	175
Buckingham - -	81	24.8	15	162
Hereford - -	84	22.5	23	110
Hertfordshire - -	84	29.2	11	140
Wilts - - -	84	24.5	10	129
Westmoreland - -	85	21.5	11	106
Cambridge - -	86	24.1	25	170
Somerset - - -	86	23.1	18	131
Surrey - - -	87	24.8	8	123
Dorset - - -	89	23.1	18	125
Oxford - - -	91	23.0	9	126
Shropshire - -	94	25.6	22	121
Sussex - - -	94	21.1	8	133
Berks - - -	97	23.5	13	132
Bedford - - -	98	22.8	29	163
Hunts - - -	98	23.8	15	148
Kent - - -	102	24.2	15	172
Hampshire - -	102	24.7	12	153
Rutland - - -	103	21.9	7	123
Suffolk - - -	105	25.1	15	161
Middlesex - -	105	29.2	12	157
Devon - - -	109	23.0	18	121
Gloucester - -	113	25.1	22	150
Northampton - -	114	23.0	27	182
Worcester - -	114	25.5	27	150
Cornwall - - -	116	21.9	39	127
Essex - - -	117	28.0	16	190
Cheshire - - -	122	26.4	25	150
North Wales - -	125	25.9	43	89
Norfolk - - -	126	24.9	21	170
Lincoln - - -	128	26.3	16	179
Cumberland - -	128	27.1	20	158
Derby - - -	129	28.3	22	227
London - - -	131	27.1	30	150
Leicester - - -	132	26.4	18	199
York, North - -	133	29.2	35	192
Warwick - - -	136	28.5	32	191
Northumberland -	137	31.7	34	195
York, East - -	139	27.9	21	214
Nottingham - -	140	29.8	25	240
York, West - -	141	26.6	38	201
Monmouth - - -	144	31.2	41	229
South Wales - -	146	32.2	48	182
Stafford - - -	146	31.0	38	217
Lancashire - -	147	27.8	38	175
Durham - - -	153	33.8	36	249

DISCUSSION.

Col. GEO. DIXON (Chairman of the Cheshire County Council), in opening the debate, said that perhaps in Cheshire they did not suffer quite so much from infant mortality as did Lancashire, but still there was a large amount of infant mortality in that county, and they were all anxious to do what they could to reduce it. Of course, it could only be attacked indirectly, and the County Council had urged the local authorities to work on the lines suggested in the paper. He had visited some of the manufacturing districts and inspected the slums. The wonder was not that people died in them, but that any were able to live in some of the tenements that were visited. Many of the houses were not fit for human habitation. Municipal authorities could do a great deal by pulling down such places, and he believed that ladies could materially help to improve the social condition of the people by visiting them in their own homes and explaining to mothers the proper methods of feeding infants. Personally he favoured the passing of a law which would prevent mothers returning too soon to factory labour after their confinement, or, indeed, from going some time before, because this would mean that the children would not be neglected as was often the case at present. Bad housing conditions and the neglect of the infants were among the chief causes of infant mortality. In ten districts in Cheshire the infant mortality was more than 145 per 1,000, and in one district it was as high as 254, another was 196, and a third 191, so that the county could not say that in this respect it was altogether satisfactory. Perhaps it was not quite so bad as Lancashire. The boroughs were, however, decidedly bad, and they would have to put their house in order. He hoped that a result of the Conference would be to draw public attention to the matter and strengthen the hands of the Local Government Board in adopting more stringent regulations to lessen the rate of infant mortality.

The MAYOR OF CHESTER explained that the municipal authority of Chester had taken progressive measures to improve sanitation by the removal of the old privies and the gradual abolition of insanitary dwellings. They had adopted the Artisans' Dwellings Act, but the work had to proceed gradually so as not to cause unpleasantness with property owners. He quite endorsed the observations that had been made with regard to the milk supply.

Miss FRANCES ZANETTI (Inspector under the Infant Life Protection Act to the Chorlton Board of Guardians) referred to Dr Newman's recent book on infant mortality, and pointed out that it stated that in England and Wales out of 100,000 babies born 25,000 die before they are five years of age, and 17,139 do not live to reach their first birthday. There was a total loss to the nation every year of not less than 120,000 lives under twelve months. She wished particularly to speak of the mortality among illegitimate children, which in London was double the mortality of legitimate children.

In tackling this subject they must turn specially to this part of the problem and see what could be done to lessen the rate of illegitimate infant mortality. The strongest measure of all was to insist upon the extension of the Infant Life Protection Act, 1897. She did not hesitate to say that as the Act stood at present it was worse than useless, because while it appeared to give protection it in reality gave less than none. An amending Bill would have become law long ago but for the opposition of one society in London—the London Diocesan Society for Rescue and Preventive Work—which argued that if the amending Bill became law so as to include one-child cases there would become a scarcity of the best homes, that women would not submit to inspection, that mothers of illegitimate children would become guilty of infanticide, desertion, and even suicide; that the profit on one-child cases is so small that there is no inducement to neglect them, and that children are often taken from motives of affection and friendship and the sheer love of child life. She had not found this to be the case at all. She had taken pains to ascertain the views of the women in charge of one-child cases, and every one of them had invited her to visit them again and said they would be only too pleased to show her how the child was getting on. They said that inspection could do no harm, that they did not mind who visits them, while one said that it would be the best answer to malicious neighbours who accused those in her position of being baby farmers. She was too sceptical to believe that motives of affection alone came into play. Certainly these women might be fond of the children, but if five shillings were paid for the child they could not think that love of the child was the chief motive. Further, when friendship was referred to, this meant friendship to the mother of the illegitimate child. Could they conclude that the friend of the mother was always the best nurse for the child? Did that not suggest that it was to the mother's advantage that—to use the expressive phrase—“something should happen to the child”? As to the suggestion that the profit was so small there was no inducement to neglect, she thought that argument applied in quite the opposite direction. She found that the payment was so small that the child did not get its full supply of milk and the nurse mother was obliged to eke out her income by doing other work. Women often complained that they had so much machining to do. One of the weakest arguments of the opponents of the amending Bill was that the children were treated by their nurse mothers quite as well as the woman's own children, and that it is unreasonable to expect more. They often heard how abominably mothers treated their own children through ignorance or carelessness, and was it right to say that illegitimate children of mothers who did not want them, and left to people who took money for them, should be equally neglected? But the strongest argument of all for an amendment of the present law was the fact that nine years ago Lord Denbigh and the Bishop of Winchester said the Act was not aimed at the baby

farmer but at those who through ignorance, carelessness, and neglect were sacrificing the lives of thousands of children. Had that ignorance, carelessness, and neglect decreased since the passing of the Act? Very little; and things would continue as they are while the children were allowed to be fed out of those horrible long-tube feeding-bottles and to have "a little bit of what we have ourselves." Were they not all bound to work for a better state of things? All Guardians and inspectors were most strongly in favour of the amendment of the Act, opposition only came from one quarter, and if Guardians were unanimous in presenting a firm front on this question, it was only a question of time before the beneficial alteration in the law would take place. She could not help feeling that the sympathy of that one rescue society was more with the mother than with the child; they were doubtless doing a great work, nobody inspected the children in one way and another more often than did that society, and was it not therefore selfish on their part to deny to thousands of babies throughout the country the protection they were able to give to their own cases? Where Boards of Guardians were not agreed on the matter, the difficulty might be overcome by an amalgamation of Unions for this special purpose, but there could be no question that if infant mortality were to be decreased they must not allow consideration for the feelings of private individuals to outweigh public necessities. (Cheers.)

Dr RHODES moved, "That this Conference is of opinion that the Infant Life Protection Act should be extended to all cases where one child is taken as well as to those where two or more are taken, and that the work of inspection should be carried out by lady inspectors appointed for the purpose."

Mr J. J. HOWETT (Northwich) seconded the motion, and expressed his gratification with Dr Rhodes' paper, particularly in regard to the housing of the working classes. As the law stood jerry builders were enabled to erect houses which in the future would have to be pulled down. He hoped that the Conference would pass some resolution on this subject, and urge the need of proper housing for the people. In his own district there were inhabited houses not fit for dog kennels, yet to pull them down would destroy the only homes available for the working classes. The overcrowding conditions were deplorable, and he did not see what could be expected of the future fathers and mothers of the nation when the children to-day were living under present conditions. He mentioned that his authority had taken special steps by the appointment of Committees to inspect the milk supplies, and detailed a case in which disease had been spread by contaminated milk supplied by a farm which had been providing milk for sixty years which practically was no better than common sewage. No one should be allowed to live in a cottage or a farm that lacked a pure water supply.

Dr BAILEY (Nantwich) drew attention to what he considered to

be a potent cause of infant mortality, viz., the employment of unqualified midwives, and urged that before registration there should be a searching examination of such persons. Such persons had no knowledge of children's diseases, and yet they often attended to them otherwise than simply for birth. This and similar practices caused much harm to the health of the community. He also strongly condemned the pernicious system of infant life insurance, and described the touting of many agents as disgraceful. Lately the amount for which infant lives were insured had been increased, and as a consequence he feared that that class of death rate would also increase. He did not mean to say the children were deliberately made ill, but the insurance of children had in many cases a tendency to encourage neglect. He also favoured legal restrictions being placed upon the sale of long-tube feeding-bottles, which it was impossible to keep clean and sweet. He also favoured the control of the milk supply by the municipal authority and the sterilisation of milk as a means of preventing the poisoning which is now taking place. (Applause.)

The discussion was adjourned to the afternoon meeting.

PRESENTATION TO MR H. JENNER-FUST.

Rev. J. W. BAKER (Chairman of the West Derby Union) moved that the President be requested to make a presentation to Mr H. Jenner-Fust, Inspector of the Local Government Board for the division, upon his approaching retirement after twenty-two years' service.

Mr J. S. HORN (Burnley) seconded, and the motion was carried *nem. con.*

The PRESIDENT said he had known Mr Jenner-Fust ever since he came into the Lancashire district, and had learnt to respect him in every way for the manner in which he had discharged his difficult and important duties as Local Government Board Inspector. The courtesy and kindness of Mr Jenner-Fust had endeared him to all with whom he had come into contact, and he (the President) deeply regretted his retirement, after fourteen years' service in that district and twenty-two years' service under the Local Government Board. A more suitable person it would have been impossible to have found to have appointed inspector. His career began as far back as 1866, when he was appointed a Justice of the Peace for the county of Gloucestershire, and became *ex-officio* a Guardian of the Thornbury Union. In this capacity he rendered valuable service, and when still a young man occupied the positions of Chairman of the Board itself, and also of the Finance and Assessment Committees. Apart from Poor Law administration he evinced a practical interest in the affairs of the district in which he lived, and was elected Chairman of the Thornbury Rural Sanitary Authority, and to a similar position in connection with the Thornbury Highway Board. For several years Mr

Jenner-Fust was Secretary of the West Midland Poor Law Conference, and also a lay representative of the Deanery of Dursley at the Gloucester and Bristol Diocesan Conference. He acted regularly at the Petty and Quarter Sessions, and was a member of the County Rate, Finance, and Police Committees. For a period of ten years he was a Visiting Justice of H.M. Prison, Gloucester, and for seven years he discharged a similar duty at the County Lunatic Asylum. He was a member of the Board of Conservators of the Severn Fishery District for fifteen years, and Vice-Chairman of the Board for four years. In 1884 he was appointed by Sir Charles Dilke one of the General Inspectors of the Local Government Board, and acted for the Oxfordshire district from that time to 1892, when he was transferred to the Lancashire district, from the inspectorship of which he would retire in November next. Mr Jenner-Fust would leave the district with the respect of every one, and they all trusted that in returning to take up the duties of a country gentleman he would be as successful in any public work he might undertake as he had been in the past. They hoped that he would be spared for many years to enjoy health and happiness. (Loud applause.)

Mr H. J. HAGGER (Hon. Secretary) then read the illuminated address as follows :—

TO H. JENNER-FUST, ESQ., M.A.

SIR,—The representatives of Lancashire Poor Law Unions present at the 32nd Annual Poor Law Conference of the North-Western District, on their own behalf and on behalf of the Guardians and Officers of the Unions they represent, desire to express to you the great regret with which they have learnt that you are about to retire from your position as one of the General Inspectors of the Local Government Board.

They gratefully remember that for the last fourteen years they have enjoyed the inestimable benefit of your advice and counsel, and they fully realise that it is due to the thorough efficiency and perfect courtesy which have invariably characterised your discharge of the duties of your office that the relations between you and themselves throughout the whole period have been of the most friendly and agreeable character.

In asking your acceptance of the accompanying tokens of their esteem and regard, they beg at the same time to assure you of their heartfelt wishes for your future happiness and their earnest hope that the cause of sound Poor Law administration may yet continue to receive your advocacy and support.

(Signed) J. T. HIBBERT,

President of the Conference.

The PRESIDENT then asked Mr Jenner-Fust to accept a silver rose bowl and the address, together with a pearl and diamond bracelet for Mrs Jenner-Fust. The bowl is sterling silver on an ebony plinth.

It is a classic design, fluted underneath, with richly chased handles in Greek ornamentation, whilst the rim is beautifully chased in repoussé of a representation of the celebrated bas-relief "The Elgin Marbles," being a facsimile of those in the British Museum. The following inscription appears on the silver shield on the plinth :—

"Presented to HERBERT JENNER-FUST, ESQUIRE, M.A., as a tribute of regard and esteem by Guardians and Officers of Lancashire Poor Law Unions, 21st September 1906." Above the inscription are the crests of Mr Jenner-Fust. The illuminated address contains the arms of Mr Jenner-Fust emblazoned in true heraldic colours, also a beautifully executed view in water-colour of Mr Jenner-Fust's house and grounds. The bowl, address, and bracelet were supplied by Messrs Elkington & Co. Ltd., The King's Goldsmiths and Silversmiths, Lord Street, Liverpool.

Mr H. JENNER-FUST, who was received with continuous applause, in acknowledging the gift, said that he had never felt more unable to express himself in speech than at that moment and to adequately thank them for their magnificent presents. He could only ask them to take the will for the deed, and to believe that he was most sincerely grateful for all their kindnesses to him. From their President he had always received the utmost sympathy and encouragement. He who set to that county such a noble example of energy and perseverance had been pleased to speak of him in terms of praise, and praise from Sir John Hibbert was praise indeed. The terms of the address and the words of the gentlemen who had spoken were only too kind. He was afraid they all described what he ought to have been. It was a marvel to him that any work of his own should have been deemed worthy of such recognition. He had simply plodded along from day to day, and had tried to do that which he conceived to be his duty. He might claim that he had had no private interests to serve, nor had he sought to advertise himself or his doings. Any successes which had attended his labours were due to the great assistance he had received from the Guardians and their officers, and also from his old friend Mr Moorsom, with whom he had worked for thirteen years in the inspectorship of the county, and also from his new friend Mr Elias. Nothing had struck him more than the indulgent way in which any suggestions he had made had been received by Boards of Guardians and their officers. It was so easy to criticise and make foolish suggestions, but any hint he had thrown out that was worthy of consideration had never passed unheeded, and any foolish proposal had always been allowed to quietly drop. Thus his difficult task had been made extremely pleasant. He was glad to think that the officers of the Guardians had been associated with him in his work ; no county could boast of a finer set of officials than the county of Lancaster. Had they in any degree set themselves against him, his task would have been rendered almost impossible. On the contrary, they had helped him in every possible way, and both the Guardians and officers had taken him into their con-

fidence. That confidence he trusted he had never abused, and he thanked them all sincerely for the way in which they had treated him in the discharge of his official duties. As if that were not enough, they had not only given him those beautiful presents, but had also remembered Mrs Jenner-Fust, who would have been with them that day but for the domestic claims of their married daughter. At certain times it was the duty of a mother to be by her daughter's side, and such consideration alone had prevented Mrs Jenner-Fust being present that day. These lovely tokens of their goodwill would always be highly valued and treasured, and in saying good-bye to them officially, he could say that it would always be a matter of pride to him to look back upon his association with the county and the work of its Poor Law Guardians, and to have helped however feebly in the administration of the Poor Law. (Loud applause.)

The Conference then adjourned.

On resuming, Sir John T. Hibbert again took the chair, and the discussion on Dr Rhodes' paper was resumed by—

Rev. T. W. WAREHAM (Rochdale) who, having paid a tribute to the authority of the paper, pointed out that the three things to which Dr Rhodes had drawn attention as bearing upon the question of infant mortality were ventilation, water, and milk. It was for public men to take these reforms in hand and endeavour to find a remedy for the evils of which complaint was made. Dr Rhodes' first panacea was education, a much-abused term, which might mean anything or nothing. In considering education, they must decide where they were to begin, and he thought it was too late to begin with the adults; they must begin with the children. They also must teach their teachers, and in this direction Guardians could bring to bear both a direct and an indirect influence. For instance, foster-mothers were sometimes appointed who had little knowledge of the duties they had to discharge towards the children placed under their care. He congratulated the county council of which Dr Rhodes was a member in sending out someone to teach the public the elements of sanitation. As to the Diocesan Society, he rather sympathised with the action of that body in desiring to limit the number of inspectors, for he had a fear that the country stood in some danger of being over-inspected. So many inspectors of one kind and another were at work that it would soon be necessary for some of them to keep a servant simply to answer the door.

Mrs WAKEFORD (Inspector of the West Derby Union) pointed out that when agitating for new legislation, it was desirable to consider whether existing legislation was thoroughly applied. The Infant Life Protection Act would do good in any county if it were thoroughly applied and an inspector were appointed to carry out the Act. If these illegitimate children were in some way to be the care of the State why were they not looked after? She was thoroughly in sympathy with the demand for strengthening the present Act, but it required the experience of an inspector under the Act to convince

one of its futility. It was quite possible for a woman to be under inspection and yet only have to move across the road to escape inspection. She agreed with what had been said as to teaching the care of infants, but held that it is girls and not the women with whom the greatest hope lies. Girls were taught cooking, to wash and to keep house, but they were not taught how to look after babies. She threw that out as a hint to any members of education authorities who might be present. Her experience almost led her to believe that motherhood was becoming a lost art. She agreed with Dr Bailey on the question of insurance, and complained that death certificates for illegitimate children or nurse children were too easily obtained. She knew of cases where doctors had given certificates although they had not seen the child for twenty-four or thirty-six hours previous to death. Infant life insurance was a serious danger and should not be allowed to go on unchecked. Motherhood was once upon a time glorified, but the position was very different to-day. She thought one useful step might be taken in making it a distinction for a girl to excel in the art of nursing, washing, dressing, and feeding babies, so training future mothers while yet in their teens.

Mr PLATT (Ashton-under-Lyne) took exception to references to the "Lancashire lassies" in the paper, and said that the paper would have been an excellent one to have read before a meeting of sanitary inspectors. It hardly applied to the duties of a Guardian, who had to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving poor, to take care of the infirm and epileptics. In his opinion the time of the Conference could have been better employed in discussing matters really appertaining to Poor Law administration. He held the Lancashire lassies in high esteem and felt it was a shame to condemn them in the way that Dr Rhodes had done in his paper. His experience of mill hands was that they were models of cleanliness and they kept themselves and their homes clean, and he entirely dissociated himself from the remarks which had been made to a contrary sense.

Mr EARNSHAW (Manchester) said that the remarks in the paper with regard to the sanitary administration of Manchester did not apply to-day. No slums were now being built in the city, and great efforts at improvement were being made.

Mr SYKES (Manchester) urged that the great cause of the high rate of infant mortality was intemperance in drink. (Hear, hear.) With drinking habits there must be slums and dirt and carelessness, and he expressed the belief that if they would study more the drink question they would be able to do something to solve the problem dealt with in the paper.

The PRESIDENT observed that they would all agree with the last speaker that the question of intemperance had a large bearing on the question.

Dr RHODES then replied to the various criticisms. He entirely agreed as to useful work that could be done by ladies and ladies'

committees in teaching mothers how to rear their children, and quoted Macclesfield as a bright example of what ladies could do in this matter. He agreed, too, that the illegitimates were a class who of all others deserved their sympathy and protection. In some parts of the country the death rate of this class was three times that of the legitimate class. He agreed with Dr Bailey as to the need for examining the qualifications of midwives, and pointed out that a midwife had no right to treat a case of sickness. As to insurance, the Conference at Milan had resolved that the age below which insurance should not be possible was four or five years, and the Home Office were to be asked to consider the question of need for fresh legislation in this direction. In France it had been abolished, together with the long-tube feeding-bottle; the sooner England followed their neighbour's example the better. The causes were complex and there was no specific remedy. He held, however, that they must still rely upon education to bring better knowledge to the girls and mothers of this country. For instance, 201 out of every thousand women married in Yorkshire were unable still to sign their names. It was one of the most uneducated parts of the country. Drink was a great cause of infant mortality, but in some Eastern countries, where there was no drunkenness, the death rate of the children was higher. Replying to Mr Platt, he said the girls to whom he referred were between fourteen and sixteen years of age. He had rather understated the facts, if anything. As to the housing in Manchester and Salford, he repeated that the conditions he had described existed to-day.

Mr EARNSHAW: In some parts only. (Laughter.)

Dr RHODES: I am not speaking of where the Lord Mayor lives; I am speaking of where the great masses of the people live. When I can point to 94,000 houses with insanitary conveniences, I say it is a disgrace to the city.

Mr EARNSHAW: Why don't you tell them how many we have done away with during the last few years?

Dr RHODES: I have said that at the rate the Corporation are going it will be a quarter of a century before they are all done away with. (Laughter.)

Mr EARNSHAW: I deny it. (Laughter.)

The PRESIDENT entirely agreed with Mr Platt in his opinion of the Lancashire lass. She was the first creature in the kingdom. (Laughter and applause.) He quite agreed that generally speaking the Lancashire women were clean housewives. But Dr Rhodes had shown conclusively that the rate of infantile mortality was much higher than it ought to be.

Dr Rhodes' resolution was then agreed to with one dissentient (Mr Earnshaw).

It was also resolved that copies of the paper and resolution should be sent to the Local Government Board and to the Home Office.

Mr R. A. LEACH (Rochdale) then read the following paper:—

THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE POOR RATE IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION.

BY MR R. A. LEACH,

Barrister-at-Law, Clerk, Rochdale Union.

To pay and grumble has long been characteristic of the ratepayer as well as of the taxpayer. The old time grumble has taken to venting itself in angry letters to the newspapers, magazine articles, editorials, demands for inquiries—such as that recently held in the administration of the Poplar Union—and in the formation of defence leagues, the latest of which is the “Middle Classes Defence Organisation,” whose promoters proclaim it to be “the outcome of a determination to put an end to the shameless way in which,” so they allege, “large and deserving sections of the community are exploited in order to satisfy the demands either of a false sentiment or of false economics.”

The reasonableness or unreasonableness of the ratepayers' anger should be judged by weighing the total burden of present-day local expenditure against what it was some years ago. The total expenditure in England and Wales (all classes of authorities) in the year ended Lady Day 1902-3 (the last year for which complete figures are available) was £128,968,743, having come up to that huge amount in fifteen years from £54,076,760, while the local indebtedness had risen from £195,442,397 to £370,607,493, and in the next year (1903-4) to £393,882,146. It is true that a large portion of such expenditure was met from other sources than rates, but in the fifteen years the expenditure met by rates increased from £27,420,223 to £50,328,412, notwithstanding that the Government contributions given in relief of rates increased from

£4,790,860 to £12,782,803. This increase of expenditure outstripped the increase both of rateable value and population, for in the fifteen years the average of the rates rose from 3s. 8d. to 5s. 8d. in the £ and from 19s. 6d. to 30s. 6d. per head of population.

Having regard to the foregoing figures, the anger of ratepayers at large is scarcely to be wondered at, although the increase of public expenditure has not been the same in all areas or proportionate to all classes of local expenditure.

The increasing burden in connection with Poor Law administration is part of the larger matter to which the foregoing paragraphs generally relate—this is my justification for having mentioned the larger matter. The ratepayer should, however, not lose sight of the fact that whereas the total expenditure of Local Authorities bundled altogether was never so high as it is to-day, it is a fact that before the Poor Law Reform Act of 1834 the normal expenditure on Poor Law relief was relatively very much in excess of what it is now, while the country was far less able to bear the burden.

The total expenditure on Poor Law relief in England and Wales for the year ended Lady Day 1905 was £14,394,411, having gone up more or less gradually in fifteen years from an annual expenditure of £8,643,318 (60 per cent.). Of the £14,394,411, 73 per cent. was met from rates, 18 per cent. from Government grants, and 9 from relatives of paupers, &c. Excluding the last source, the expenditure represented a rate of 8s. 6d. per head of the estimated population, or 1s. 5d. in the £ of rateable value. From the following analysis it will be seen that the expenditure on Poor Law relief is increasing in all departments of the administration.

Account.	Expenditure during year ended Lady Day 1905.	Increase on expenditure fifteen years previously (1891).
In - maintenance (Workhouse Poor) - - - -	£3,174,481	£1,222,995
Outdoor Relief - - - -	3,265,228	865,139
Lunatics in Asylums - - - -	2,339,963	1,055,307
Salaries and Superannuation Allowances of Officers, &c.	2,428,599	975,789
Loan Repayments and Interest -	1,133,351	512,590
Other expenses of or immediately connected with relief, including building repairs, furniture, rents, rates, &c. -	2,052,789	1,119,273
	<u>£14,394,411</u>	<u>£5,751,093</u>

An examination of the expenditure would be incomplete without giving the number of paupers. The following figures are therefore given :—

Class of Paupers.	1st January 1905.	1st January 1891.	Increase on 1891.
Workhouse, except casuals and insane - - - -	238,316	175,852	62,464
Outdoor - - - -	570,613	523,618	46,995
Casual Paupers relieved at night - - - -	9,768	4,960	4,808
Insane in Asylums - - - -	83,816	53,425	30,391
Insane in Workhouses and on Out-Relief List - - -	22,546	22,184	362
	<u>925,059</u>	<u>780,039</u>	<u>145,020</u>

Ratio of all classes of paupers per 1,000 of estimated population 1905, 27.6; 1891, 27.1 (1st January).

Taking the intervening years between 1891 and 1905, both of expenditure and numbers, it cannot be said that the latter year was abnormal. The increase of total expenditure has been continuous, although there have been ebbs and flows in the total number of paupers. The number of insane in asylums has continuously increased, and but for small decreases in 1892 on 1891, and in 1897 on 1896, and in 1901 on

1900, the same observation applies to the number of Workhouse poor. The recently issued returns for the 1st January 1906 disclose a decrease in the outdoor on the preceding 1st January, but as there was a substantial increase in Workhouse poor and asylum insane, the total expenditure for the 1906 year will, when published, in all probability be found again higher than that of any preceding year.

A recent comparative statement issued by the Local Government Board of the cost of relief of the poor in certain years shows the following increases in cost per head of pauper :—

Year ended Lady Day	AVERAGE ANNUAL COST.									
	All Classes, including Lunatics in Asylums.					Workhouse Poor.			Outdoor Relief Poor.	
1849	-	-	£5	6	5	£7	17	8	£3	11 2
1870	-	-	7	8	0	9	11	8	4	5 8
1890	-	-	10	17	3	10	2	11	4	11 4
1900	-	-	14	10	5	12	6	7	5	6 1
1905 (estimated)	-	-	16	13	8	13	5	5	5	13 11

The cost per head has gone up, while the cost of the necessities of life have come down.

Who, it may be asked, are responsible for the increasing burden of Poor Law expenditure? In an article on "Local Finance" in last month's *Fortnightly Review*, Mr John Holt Schooling, the statistician, puts all the blame on Boards of Guardians. He observes that apologists for local finance are apt to harp upon the string of altruism and to strain that good quality, and goes on to state that "it is not possible to be altruistic with the money of other persons, and if local spending authorities are swayed by altruistic intent, as, for example, in the enormously increased expenditure upon Poor Law purposes, such altruism dwindles into nothingness. And in this instance, at any rate, the local spending authorities are doing much more harm than good by directly encouraging lack of self-reliance, prudence, and restraint in the lower social sections of our population." Mr John Holt Schooling, a very

clever man, in this indictment no doubt represents not a small section of the grumbling ratepayers. Nevertheless the indictment is overdone, and has in it a considerable mixture of injustice and ignorance. To begin with, the increasing burden of Poor Law relief is *not* enormous. When compared with other classes of public expenditure it is a long way behind: for instance, it is a long way off being abreast of the increase in naval and military expenditure. In the next place, the charge that Guardians are the direct encouragers of lack of self-reliance falls to the ground in face of the fact that whereas the ratio of all classes of paupers per 1,000 of population in 1905 was only 26.2, in 1890 it was 27.3, and in 1870, 46.5, and in 1849, 62.7.* Again, no one who had not stumbled into a pit of ignorance would hold Boards of Guardians responsible for the increase of lunacy—an increase traced largely to intemperance, and bad social and industrial conditions. The increase of the cost of pauper lunatics during the fifteen years mentioned above was nearly a fifth of the increase of the total relief expenditure. Separating the cost of pauper lunatics from other expenditure, the remaining expenditure, if we leave officers aside for the moment, all goes to, or is incurred on behalf of, the Workhouse and outdoor poor.

Let us take the expenditure on the Workhouse poor. I use the term Workhouse as embracing all classes of institutions under the control of Boards of Guardians and similar bodies. During the last fifteen years there has been great progress made in the better classification of the indoor poor in the way of improved Workhouses, separate Infirmaries, Cottage Homes for the aged, Cottage Homes and Scattered Homes for the children, sanatoria for consumptives, and colonies for epileptics and feeble-minded. In the erection and improvement of these institutions during the last ten

* The figures here are on "mean number."

years there has been expended over £10,000,000. These new institutions, along with the old ones, have had to be debited with the share of the increase of all sorts of local rates, and this in itself must be an appreciable factor in the total increase of the Poor Law expenditure. Surely Guardians are not to blame if their expenditure has to be weighted with a share of the increasing expenditure of other spending bodies.

Besides better classification there has been in other respects more generous, and therefore more costly, treatment of the indoor poor—treatment which the Guardians, whether they approved of it or not, were compelled to measure out under Orders of the Local Government Board. I refer to the Nursing in Workhouses Order, 1897, and the Workhouse Dietaries Order, 1900. If Boards of Guardians are not to be credited with the improvements in respect of the indoor poor, they are certainly not to be blamed for the increased and increasing expenditure which such improvements involve, for in nothing have they gone ahead of public or obligatory demands for improvements. It is no right of the Guardians to lag behind public or legal demands. Progress has to be paid for, and if the worst-conditioned Union in the matter of classification and treatment of the indoor chargeable poor has to be brought up to the standard of the best, the present expenditure is a long way off what future expenditure may be expected to run up to. Combination of Unions for special purposes might do something to lessen the expenditure, but there is room for doubt whether combinations will find many advocates at any time, and, save in a few groups of urban Unions, it may be doubted whether such combinations would be found economical or practicable.

The improvement in the treatment of the indoor poor, especially the aged and sick, is in a large measure the reason behind the increasing number of such poor. The reluctance of the poor to enter the

Workhouse, and of their relatives and friends to have them there, has mostly vanished. With all our affection for that fundamental principle of the Poor Law that the pauper shall not be in so eligible a position as the most lowly paid labourer maintaining himself and his family on the fruits of his own industry, the principle has long gone to the wall so far as the indoor poor go. In our most backward institutions the indoor pauper is far better housed, clothed, and fed, and if sick better nursed, than the average artisan or his dependants can be, and that such is the case Guardians are not insensible to the need for constant watchfulness against persons, who in the first instance are properly given an indoor order, being allowed to remain in the Workhouse any longer than necessary. Nobody knows better than Guardians do that it is quite possible to have about our Workhouses too many nurses and too few taskmasters.

In the figures above there is shown an increase of £865,139 in outdoor relief expenditure. The figures for 1904 against 1890 show an increase of £537,270 in the expenditure, with a decrease of 14,159 in the number of recipients of relief. This indicates more adequate relief to individuals than lax administration. There is no blame to Guardians for the increased relief allowances. The circulars issued by the Local Government Board in recent years have encouraged an increase of relief to the outdoor poor, while Parliament, mistrusting the discretion of local administrators of relief, has in the Outdoor Relief (Friendly Societies) Act, 1904, forced upon Guardians preferential treatment of members of friendly societies, and now we have got the "Relief (School Children) Order" issued in a hurry and without regard to local opinion. If these things are to be, expenditure will increase, and Guardians must not be found fault with for their obedience to the inspiration or legal commands of the powers above them. The total outdoor relief expendi-

ture might be reduced with advantage if public sentiment would allow of it, but it cannot be said, taking all things into consideration, that it is so large as to be very mischievous.

The increase of expenditure in respect of Poor Law officers is very considerable. An increase from £1,452,810 in 1891 to £2,428,599 in 1905 (fifteen years) is a big jump. This expenditure includes superannuation allowances. The figures under that head are not yet to hand, but they are sure to be rather in advance of the allowances in 1904, which amounted to £126,033, towards which there was deducted from Poor Law officers' salaries £54,219, leaving a net charge to the rates of £71,814. This net amount may be set down as from £40,000 to £50,000 in excess of the amount for 1891, and is the result of the operation of the Poor Law Officers' Superannuation Act, 1896—a piece of legislation the advantages of which are by no means all on the side of officers. Deducting the increase of superannuation allowances, there still remains an increase of nearly £1,000,000 for salaries, and the results of my inquiry into the matter show that this large increase is in the main for increased staffing occasioned by new institutions, better classification and treatment of the indoor poor. On the increase in cost of officers no one needs to be alarmed. Experience teaches that Guardians everywhere may be relied on (1) never to increase their staff before they feel obliged to; (2) never to pay higher salaries in making appointments than they can help; and (3) never to increase an officer's salary before the increase has been earned—indeed, the rule is, if an increase is given at all, not to give it until it has become overdue.

The question, "Who are responsible for the increasing burden of Poor Law expenditure?" is one that, I submit on the facts stated above, need not be laboured. I have suggested that taking the country

as a whole, relief expenditure has not reached its highest mark. How high that mark will be, the future can only make known. If the habits of the people improve, if industrial conditions improve, and with such improvements the terrible malady of lunacy decreases—and it would decrease with such improvements—if public sentiment keeps reasonable, if Guardians have regard to due economy, and the present system of Government audit and inspection continues, and finally, if Guardians are left *in existence*, then the highest water mark of future pauper relief will be lower than would otherwise be the case. I want to emphasise the final “if,” because there are already those who are thinking that the abolition of Boards of Guardians will quickly follow on the issue of the Report of the present Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Their wish most likely is father to the thought. In writing this paper I had before me a tract published a few months ago by the Fabian Society—a society believed to have friends in influential quarters—in which it is stated that “there are many reasons, both general and special, why the whole machinery of the Poor Law as it stands at present should be thrown out on the political scrap-heap.” After long experience of Poor Law machinery, and having in mind the results of the abolition of some other public bodies elected on the *ad hoc* principle, I can imagine no plan better calculated to extravagantly and mischievously rush up poor relief expenditure and breed administrative mischief than the plan of abolishing Boards of Guardians.

In conclusion, I would mention that poor relief expenditure as a burden might be lightened by broadening the basis on which it is raised. That the basis ought to be broadened has been long admitted. As now raised it operates to free the wealthy from an equitable share of the burden of the poor man. That, however, is equally true of the whole incidence of local taxation. For five years a Royal Commission was engaged on

this very subject; five years ago that Commission issued its final Report, and advocated reform right and left, but having, as a people, been in the meantime too imperially inclined, the reform of the incidence of local taxation has necessarily had to be shelved. It is to be hoped that this long-delayed reform will have a chance, say, before another five years have gone.

DISCUSSION.

Sir WM. CHANCE, Bart. (Hon. Secretary of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences), said that he had listened to many Conference papers but he did not think he had ever listened to a better one than that read by Mr Leach. The time had come when they should face this vast increase, not only of expenditure upon Poor Law relief, but also municipal expenditure. It was not only Guardians who were responsible for the increasing burden on the ratepayer, but there were a number of other bodies. The question did not affect Cheshire and Lancashire only, it affected the whole country, and perhaps more than anything else it affected the great Metropolis. The facts put before them in the paper were perfectly well known. In London alone the expenditure on Poor Law relief had nearly doubled in forty years. He did not think anybody would want to go back to the state of Workhouse life existing in 1865, to which Miss Louisa Twining had called attention and had done so much to remedy. The result of the inquiry into London Workhouses was Gathorne Hardy's Act, which led to the raising of the standard of Poor Law administration all over London. The increase in regard to provincial Unions only began about fifteen years back, and had gone up from six millions to nine millions in those years, or 50 per cent. This was enormous; but exactly the same causes had been at work all over the country that were at work in London forty years ago and in large towns. Poor Law administration had been improved in every possible way. There might be extravagance in some cases, as for instance at Poplar and West Ham—the latter was infinitely worse than the former—but he held that the body primarily responsible for the great increase in expenditure on Poor Law administration was Parliament itself. Parliament was supposed to represent public opinion, and he ascribed the increased expenditure to the various socialistic measures which had been passed by Parliament during the last fifteen years. One cause Mr Leach had not mentioned, and it might not have occurred to any one, and that was that fifteen years ago began the agitation for old age pensions; that had more to do with the increased expenditure on Poor Law admini-

stration than anything else. Very few inquired where those pensions were to come from ; it might mean five or it might mean fifteen millions or twenty millions, and Parliament had been trying to stave off old age pensions. Ministers of all parties knew that old age pensions would mean an enormous increase in the taxation of the country, and those who would suffer from that would be the poor themselves. Hence various things had been done to stave off the question. There was Mr Chaplin's circular in 1900, recommending an increase of out-relief. It was perfectly true that circular referred only to the aged poor ; and it said the Guardians were not to drive the aged poor into the Workhouse—Guardians never had done so. That circular, brought about by the agitation for old age pensions, had been misinterpreted by a great many Boards, some, he was sorry to say, in Lancashire, and had led to more out-relief being given all round. Then there was another Act, another a "throwing to the wolves," the Outdoor Relief Friendly Societies Act, which in many places was a dead letter, but he knew there were Unions where it had had a great effect in increasing expenditure, because persons were encouraged to throw themselves on the Poor Law who otherwise would not have done so. Then the question of the unemployed had been a fruitful cause of increased expenditure. So long as Parliament backed up all these things, so long would Guardians, who were only human after all, have to give way to them. Poor Law relief expenditure was not the greatest burden on the ratepayers, it was the least burden really. It was the other calls for sanitary and general administration which constituted the burden. During the past seven years the call for Poor Law relief had fallen very largely, but county council expenditure had doubled itself. Therefore Guardians were not the only persons to be blamed. He did not say that the expenditure could not be reduced, but some people believed that it could be reduced by giving more out-relief. That was inaccurate, for the more out-relief that was given the more people would come into the Workhouse. That had been proved as an absolute fact. The giving of out-relief demoralised the people. In all these matters it should be remembered that with this great increase in taxation it was the poor who suffered in the end. He did not know how to stop it or to prevent socialistic legislation, but the fact remained that the increased expenditure of the last fifteen years had been concurrent with the greater influence obtained by those who advocated socialistic opinions in this country. (Cheers.)

Rev. T. BRIDGE (Chester) proposed a vote of thanks to Mr Leach for his paper, and reminded the Conference that ten years ago he had in that room read a paper on the subject of old age pensions in which he had predicted that such grants would weaken filial relations, be turned to political purposes, and undermine the natural duty of thrift and providence. While his sympathies went out to the poor, and he was willing to stretch the law to the uttermost limit, yet it still remained true that as they adhered to the principles of the 1834

Act or otherwise so would pauperism rise and fall. They could not disobey the natural eternal laws and not suffer. The strict application of the principles of the Poor Law would be followed by a natural decrease of pauperism. He complained, however, that rates should be called poor rates when they were required for many other purposes besides the relief of the poor. The Workhouse was also a misnomer. Facts were stronger than logic. When the 1834 Act was passed the Legislature thought large Workhouses would be required; and large Workhouses were built all over the country, and the consequence was that they had been found to be larger than was necessary. But the standard of public opinion had been raised, and Guardians were bound to follow it whether they liked it or not, especially in regard to infirmary accommodation, which was costly. (Cheers.)

Mr EARNSHAW (Manchester) seconded the motion. He suggested, as a means of decreasing expenditure in asylums, that more attention should be paid to the great cause of insanity, intemperance, and that Guardians were often too willing to add years to the service of officers for superannuation purposes.

Dr RHODES reminded the Conference that it was the poor who paid the poor rate, and they had a right to ask if they got an adequate return. As to the cost of the asylums, he did not believe in the suggested increase of insanity, and pointed out that there was a credit side to all this expenditure upon asylums, viz., the enormous saving there was to themselves in looking after the afflicted, the prevention of suffering and stamping out disease, all of which meant the saving of enormous sums spent in other ways if the circumstances were different.

The PRESIDENT said he had always tried to urge upon Guardians at that Conference that they had it very much in their own hands to either increase or decrease expenditure. He never for a moment discouraged expenditure in improving the Workhouses and infirmaries, and in making them comfortable for the old people, but he did grudge money given with laxity in out-relief, because he believed that meant destroying the spirit of independence and self-help among the people. After all, they spent only ten millions on the Poor Law last year, and the nation's bill for alcoholic liquors was something like 150 or 160 millions. If only a small proportion of that vast sum were devoted to make the homes of the people better, this country would be a much happier place. (Hear, hear.)

The vote of thanks having been accorded, and acknowledged, the Conference adjourned.

In the evening the delegates dined together at the Grosvenor Hotel, Sir J. T. Hibbert in the chair. The toasts were "The King," "Mr Jenner-Fust," "Sir William Chance, Bart.," "The President," and "The Hon. Secretary." The speeches were short and informal.

SATURDAY, 22ND SEPTEMBER.

Sir J. T. Hibbert, K.C.B., again presided.

Dr Rhodes, Mr H. J. Hagger, and the Rev. T. Bridge were elected representatives of the Conference on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences, the last named taking the place of the late Canon Hignett.

Liverpool was selected as the place for next year's Conference, Mr R. A. LEACH pointing out that this would afford delegates an opportunity of inspecting the training ship "Indefatigable," on which many of their boys were learning seamanship under Captain Bremner.

The PRESIDENT remarked that it would also provide an opportunity of paying a compliment to their Hon. Secretary, who was celebrating his sixtieth year of official life. (Hear, hear.)

Mr DEAN intimated that a proposal would probably then be submitted for an invitation to Ulverston being accepted for 1908.

The Hon. SECRETARY announced that a telegram had been received from the Right Hon. John Burns, M.P., President of the Local Government Board, expressing regret at being unable to attend the Conference.

The PRESIDENT observed that it was to be hoped they might have a visit from Mr Burns on some future occasion.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE, Bart. (Hambleton), read the following paper—

THE TREATMENT OF VAGRANTS.

BY SIR WILLIAM CHANCE, BART.,

*Member of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, 1904.
Guardian, Hambleton Union. Author of "Our Treatment of the Poor," &c.*

IN the paper which I read on the 3rd May last at the West Midland Poor Law Conference, and which I hope is in the hands of most of you, I gave a general review of the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy. That I may not repeat myself, I do not propose on this occasion to deal with the whole range of the Committee's Report (although this is not shut out from discussion to-day), but rather to emphasise a few special points.

Doubtless most of those present are fully conversant with the Report, but it may be convenient at

the outset of this paper to mention that the scheme suggested by the Committee divides itself into two main branches. The first branch refers to the relief of vagrants. The Committee thought that casual wards were still required for male vagrants, but should be transferred from the care of the Guardians to the police authorities, which, as you know, are the standing joint committees in counties and the watch committees in separate police boroughs. Male vagrants requiring relief on their journey would thus be relieved under the directions of the police, but the Committee were of opinion that women and children vagrants—of whom the number was comparatively small—should be received into the Workhouse, which was more suitable for them than the casual wards. Generally the treatment in the casual wards would be on the same lines as now, but there would be uniformity in task, diet, and detention. To meet the hardship that under the present system the vagrant was not provided with a midday meal on the road from one casual ward to another, the Committee suggest means for supplying a ration of food for all men leaving casual wards, and that the *bona-fide* work-seeker on tramp should be provided for by a scheme of way-tickets, based largely on the successful system now in force in Switzerland.

The other branch relates to the punishment and remedial treatment of persons convicted of repeated vagrancy offences. In lieu of a series of terms of short imprisonments which have no useful effect on the vagrant, the Report suggests the identification of previous offenders and their detention for terms varying from six months to three years in institutions where their treatment might have better results than follow from ordinary imprisonment.* These institutions

* The advantages of the system of identification are very great. By moving into another district the vagrant at present practically escapes all chance of identification, and is able to pose as a first offender. Thus a vagrant punished in Surrey for an act of vagrancy finds his way subsequently to Lancashire, and commits another

—labour colonies—to which persons convicted as “habitual vagrants” would be sent, are to be provided in the first instance either by religious or philanthropic societies, or by the councils of counties or county boroughs, half of the cost of maintenance being borne by the State.

In my previous paper I went rather fully into the proposals under these two main heads, and my intention is now, if you will allow me, to deal with certain criticisms which I have heard expressed as to the effect of these proposals.

THE DETENTION OF HABITUAL VAGRANTS.

I will take, first, points arising under the more important side of the question, the detention of habitual vagrants :—

1. *Interference with Liberty of the Subject.*—Whether or not labour colonies or institutions of that kind are likely to be of advantage to the inmates or the community at large, it is argued that such a system of compulsory detention of vagrants would be a grave interference with the liberty of the subject, which would not be tolerated by public opinion of this day. This view seems to me to be put forward under a misapprehension. The Committee make no general proposal for the detention of all vagrants ; their scheme is, in fact, but a slight extension of the present law. The incorrigible rogue, who is the man convicted for a third time of a vagrancy offence—either begging, sleeping out, &c.—can, under the existing Vagrancy Act, be sent by quarter sessions to prison for twelve months with hard labour. Here is the principle already in force for the compulsory detention of

vagrancy offence there. He again gets off lightly as a first offender, and so the game goes on. If the recommendation of the Committee were carried out, the vagrant convicted of an offence could be remanded to the casual ward pending inquiries about him at New Scotland Yard, and as to whether his finger-prints were already recorded there.

habitual vagrants. But this system has failed, firstly because there is great difficulty in tracing the previous convictions, and it is comparatively rarely that an habitual vagrant offender gets treated as an incorrigible rogue, for he can generally make his way into another sessional district and start with a clean sheet. Secondly, because prison has proved a wholly unsuitable place for the treatment of vagrant offenders.

It must be remembered that it is no part of the Committee's proposals to shut up the vagrant who simply wanders. Unless a man commits certain acts which are offences under the existing law, *i.e.*, begging, sleeping out, insubordinate conduct in the casual wards, and neglect to maintain himself (when physically able to do so), so that he becomes frequently chargeable, he would in no way come within their scheme for detention, and would still be free to wander at will. What the Committee do is to recognise that even a year's imprisonment in our local prisons neither acts as a deterrent to the ordinary vagrant, nor affords any means of reforming him; that the offences of the vagrant are due more to his mode of life than a criminal intent, and for this he requires remedial treatment; and that such treatment can best be given in institutions of the labour colony type. That liberty of the subject, which we all respect, should not include license to commit offences, and when the vagrant by repeated offences proves himself an habitual, it can be no breach of the liberty of the subject to prescribe for him a period of detention, both for his own reformation and for the defence of society. Instead of a year's penal treatment in a prison, we suggest detention under reformatory influences, the length of which will within certain limits depend on the man's conduct. No case would be sent to a labour colony but under proper safeguards. The proof of the man's habitual offences being established, it would be for quarter sessions to direct his detention and fix the period, and this period

could be reduced by the colonist showing improvement in his ways. I actually heard a member of the House of Commons, who supports the Trades Unions' Disputes Bill, raise this objection. That is, he is perfectly ready to prevent an honest working man from working for whom he will or for what wages he likes, while he objects to punishing the habitual offender against the vagrancy laws by depriving him of his liberty for a time to carry on this dishonest life. Surely there is a want here of what Mr Haldane has called "exact thinking."

While, then, it does not seem to me that in fact there is any breach of the liberty of the subject, on the other hand, the advantage of the scheme is great. The harm done by the habitual vagrant being at large and free to commit offence after offence, the expense and difficulty caused by his frequent short imprisonments, his interference with the unemployed problem, are reasons which amply justify and render necessary the proposal made by the Committee. It is important to bear in mind that the vagrants to be sent to enforced labour colonies are limited to this class, and that therefore not many of these colonies would be wanted, a point which bears very materially on the question of expense.

It is hardly necessary, I think, for me to expatiate on the present alternative to labour colony detention—the system of short sentences. The mischief and uselessness of this system is fully described in the Report, and is recognised by all who have practical knowledge of the subject.

2. *Should not Labour Colonies be provided by the Poor Law Authorities?*—This is a proposal which is put forward in certain quarters. It is, of course, contrary to the principle of the Vagrancy Committee's recommendations, which is to relieve the Poor Law authorities of the care of the male vagrant. But apart

from this it is open to objections which render it to my mind impossible of acceptance.

If each Board of Guardians were empowered to provide a labour colony, it would probably lead to very large expense, and might mean the establishment of some hundreds of colonies, each providing treatment of a different kind; besides, the area is not large enough. And to the provision of labour colonies for vagrants by combinations of Guardians, *e.g.*, by a joint committee of the Boards of Guardians in a county, there are also many objections. Joint bodies are notoriously difficult of working, they are expensive, and there is an absence of direct control and responsibility.

Moreover, there are general objections to provision and management by Boards of Guardians of institutions of the kind we suggest. In the first place, it is not proposed that any part of the expenses should come directly from the poor rate. Secondly, it is not likely, as I have said, that any great number of these labour colonies will be required.

Again, the opinion of the Committee was that it was likely that more good would result and that the experiment would be worked more cheaply if it was left generally to philanthropic societies to manage the colonies, and although it was suggested that power be given to county councils to establish labour colonies, if necessary, it was felt that in practice the matter would be better left to private agencies, the county councils confining themselves to their power of contribution towards the maintenance of cases sent from their district. It must be borne in mind that such colonies would be under strict regulations and the general supervision of the Home Office.

One great feature in the labour colony system would be the exercise of personal influences: it is in an institution under private management that the individual would be more likely to be benefited and to be

brought in contact with reformatory and religious influences.

Another point is that the duties of a Board of Guardians are primarily the care of the pauper and the relief of destitution ; it is clearly outside the scope of these duties that they should be burdened with the care and maintenance of vagrant offenders and the management of institutions which are intended as a substitute for prisons. The Report in effect suggests that the labour colony should be an adult reformatory school ; and our scheme is based on the lines of the inebriate reformatory system. Neither of these institutions are under the Guardians.

Indeed the chief ground that can be urged for giving the control of labour colonies for vagrants to the Guardians is that at present the casual pauper is relieved by them ; but this the Committee wish to alter. To put practically all vagrant offenders under the Guardians is directly contrary to their main recommendations, that the male adult vagrant should be entirely under the control of the police authorities.

3. My last point under the head of labour colonies relates to the suggestion that it is not worth while to go to the trouble and expense of establishing a new kind of prison for a particular class of offenders. I think the Report of the Committee affords a sufficient reply to this argument. We show there that on account of the mode of life and character of the vagrant an ordinary prison is no source of terror to him and does him no good. On the contrary, he often wilfully commits offences in order to be sent to prison. The annual Reports of the Prison Commissioners testify to the large numbers of vagrant offenders who year by year are found in the local prisons and to the difficulties of classification and management caused there by them. It is abundantly clear that prisons as at present existing are unsuitable for vagrants. And as it would be difficult for the prisons to supply differential treatment for

different classes, while the terms of imprisonment of vagrant offenders could not be sufficiently lengthened without rendering their punishment more severe than that of more serious offenders, a new class of institution for the treatment of vagrants seems inevitable. The Prison Commissioners in their recent Reports show their desire for such a change.

THE RELIEF OF VAGRANTS.

I will now turn for a short time to the other branch of the subject—the relief of vagrants. The historical and practical arguments for the transfer of this matter from the Guardians to the police are fully set out in the Report, and there is no necessity to recapitulate them here. I should like to say, however, that there is already evidence of a very strong feeling on the part of Guardians in favour of the Committee's proposals, while I understand that chief constables of counties are beginning to realise the advantage of the proposal.

There are criticisms on these points to which I propose to refer.

(1.) It has been suggested that the transfer of the casual wards to the care of the police authority will render the vagrant unwilling to apply for the hospitality of the wards.

No doubt the habitual vagrant who has committed offences will become somewhat shy of the wards when they are under police control or supervision ; and this is the intention. At present things are easy for him ; he is encouraged in his idle and useless life, and he has little fear of detection, for he can avoid the police without difficulty. But the Committee had no intention to prevent such a man using the wards. Even the professional vagrant will find them open to him, and there need be no fear that he will be driven to sleep out. He may indeed go more to the common lodging-house, but the cost of that will tend to diminish his wanderings. What will happen when he uses the wards will be that

he will find everywhere uniform enforcement of task and detention, with a uniform diet, and he will be subject to police supervision which will enable him, if an offender, to be easily traced.

In the case of the man who is wandering in search of work the conditions under the system we propose will be far more satisfactory than at present. The way-ticket recommended by the Committee for a genuine work-seeker will prove an "open sesame" to preferential treatment at the wards on his route. Whether a task is enforced or not in the case of the way-ticket man depends on the Central Authority which sets up the system—the Committee thought a light task of an hour or two would be an advantage in promoting a feeling of independence and affording some return for the assistance granted at the cost of the rates. If the genuine working man on tramp does not take the trouble to procure a way-ticket he cannot expect to receive the advantages of that system, but even then the wards are open to him and the conditions for him will be much the same as the existing regulations require ; and if he has not committed offences he need have no fear of the police control of the wards. In any case there is no real reason for the vagrant *qua* vagrant objecting to the police ; indeed he may receive as kindly treatment from them as can be experienced at the hands of the present casual ward officials.

(2.) Another criticism is that difficulty is likely to be caused if the present wards are put under the police. This criticism applies chiefly to the wards which are now at the Workhouse. Where the wards are entirely separate from the Workhouse I do not see that the least difficulty can arise. The building will be taken over by the police authority at a rent, while the existing staff can be continued as officers of the police authority.

But where the casual wards adjoin or form part of the Workhouse it is suggested that friction may arise

either in the continuance of the master as superintendent of the wards, when he would be practically under two masters, or, if a police officer is appointed superintendent, in his power of access to the Workhouse. I admit that in these as in other points of detail under the new scheme there may be some slight difficulties, but they are not such as cannot easily be provided for. It is not intended that where the present casual wards cannot be separated from the Workhouse and given a separate entrance that they should be transferred to the police. In such a case, if casual wards were needed in that district, new buildings would have to be provided. But it should be clearly understood that under the Committee's proposals the number of casual wards will be greatly reduced. At present, casual wards are frequently too close together and many are superfluous. This has resulted from the position of the Workhouses. Under our scheme many of these superfluous wards, therefore, could be given up as casual wards, and would be available for use by the Guardians for the ordinary indoor poor, and might assist their better classification.

It is to save expense that the Committee suggest that where necessary the existing wards should be still used as casual wards if proper arrangements could be made. The whole matter would be one for amicable arrangement between the Guardians and the police authority, and there should be little difficulty in settling affairs to their mutual advantage. If the present wards are separate or can be separated from the Workhouse it is certainly preferable that they should be used; the police authority would be saved the expense of providing new buildings, and the Guardians would get rent for the wards. And it would be to the advantage of the Workhouse master in a small Workhouse to continue to act as superintendent of the wards; for that purpose only he would become an officer of the police authority, and so far as the management of the wards

was concerned would be subject to supervision and control by them. In a small place these duties need not interfere with the discharge of his functions as master of the Workhouse. The duties of the two offices would be clearly defined, and I see no reason why friction should occur.

Of course if the existing superintendent of the wards could not act both as an officer of the Guardians and of the police authority, it would be necessary for the latter to appoint an officer *ad hoc*.

When the casual wards adjoin or form part of the Workhouse, the Committee thought that much trouble would be saved by the supply of food, &c., from the Workhouse. This could most easily be arranged for at a fixed charge per vagrant per night, the food, &c., being supplied on a written demand by the superintendent of the ward (either the Workhouse master or police officer). It may be observed that the proposals as to dietary in casual wards will render the supply of food a much more simple matter than formerly. There will be one fixed diet all over the country.

In considering the details of the transfer of the wards it is necessary to remember, as I said just now, that the whole matter is one for arrangement between the two authorities.

(3.) The last point I wish to deal with relates to the admission of women and children vagrants to the Workhouse instead of to the casual wards. A few objections have been raised. These objections are principally that inconvenience might be caused in the Workhouse by the admission of vagrants as ordinary inmates, and that where husbands and wives are on tramp there would be difficulty in their meeting again if the man went to casual wards under the police while the woman was received into the Workhouse possibly some distance away.

The first objection is an administrative one which

in practice could easily be met; for instance, the receiving wards could be used for suspicious cases, and there are few Workhouses without accommodation that could be made available on an emergency. The other objection loses much force when you consider that very few husbands and wives are on tramp together, and that it is often the case that the women go to the common lodging-house while the men avail themselves of the casual wards. The Report suggests that where the husband and wife on tramp have a way-ticket the woman should be allowed to discharge herself from the Workhouse in time to meet the husband the following morning.

Frankly, I attach little importance to these objections. On the other hand, I am convinced that the change we suggest would have great advantages. There are but few cases of women vagrants *bona fide* in search of employment. Even for them the Workhouse will give them a better chance of obtaining their object. For the professional woman vagrant who drags children round the country for the sake of exciting charity, the Workhouse will be deterrent, and will at the same time offer a real opportunity of reclaiming the children from their vagrant life.

In order to receive women in the casual wards it is necessary to keep female officers, and even then there is not always a safeguard against those evils which Mrs Higgs pointed out to the Committee in her evidence. The removal of women from the wards does away with the need for a double staff, and at once greatly simplifies the scheme for transfer to the police.

There is a real hardship often felt under existing conditions. An old woman comes to the casual wards badly needing a rest and care, but is turned away after the one or two nights as the case may be. In the Workhouse she will have an opportunity of recovering her strength.

For both women and children there is no question as to the humanity of the proposal we make.

I am sure that you will all agree with the observations of the Committee on that class of vagrant whom they describe as "wandering to their own hurt," especially "such as are weak-minded." Probably after the Report of the Royal Commission on the Feeble-Minded appears, some steps may be taken to protect them both against themselves and for the benefit of the public.

I cannot conclude this paper without once more emphasising the great defect of the present system, in that two separate authorities have to deal with the vagrant class as a whole. The change advocated would be of the utmost value, because the vagrant, whether in a free shelter, or partaking of a free meal, or in an unemployed procession or meeting, or in a common lodging-house, or in a casual ward, would at last be brought under the control of one single authority, and the detection of crime and imposture would thus be greatly facilitated. Whether you agree with the main proposals of the Departmental Committee or not, I think you must admit that they have at any rate brought the facts together in a way that has never been done before, and that its labours will not have been wasted.

DISCUSSION.

Mr H. JENNER-FUST, in opening the debate, said they would all agree with the last sentence in Sir William Chance's able paper that the Departmental Committee had brought the facts together in a way that had never been done before, and that its labours would not have been wasted. A year ago at Lancaster he had ventured to suggest that the vagrants should be dealt with by a combination of Boards of Guardians. In that way the area of chargeability would be extended, and the system could be brought into operation at once without waiting for legislation. Now they had the proposal that the vagrants should come under the management of the police, and it seemed probable that such a scheme would be submitted for adoption. There were some points in this scheme on which he and

others would like a little more light. The great advantage assumed to be gained by the scheme was uniformity of action. Assuming that the Home Office laid down hard and fast lines for all the twenty police authorities in Lancashire, was it certain that there would be any more uniformity of action than had been obtained under the Local Government Board and the thirty Boards of Guardians? Unless the Local Authorities were to be entirely passed over they would have these twenty police authorities more or less administering the rules in their own way. They would therefore hardly expect to get that rigid uniformity of action which seemed to be expected. There was, too, a difficulty with women and children being sent to the Workhouse when the Workhouse was some distance from the vagrant wards. They would have to be brought back again at the end of a couple of days to rejoin the man. In large towns there was the "corner" man and loafers who used the vagrant wards considerably, and these were not vagrants in the ordinary sense. Were the police to receive that class also, and if not, what was to be done with them? Then casuals who fell sick could be dealt with where the infirmaries were close to the vagrant wards, but when they were a long way away there might arise an administrative difficulty, and certainly expense, unless, as in some places, there was an infirmary for casuals. There would also be occasions for periods of remand while inquiries were being made, and, as he had suggested before, if they were to depart from the ordinary practice of the law and throw the onus of proof more upon the vagrant himself, to show he is not leading a vagrant life, time and trouble would be saved. The vagrant's statement could soon be tested, and some difficulty of dealing with the vagrant while under remand would be thus overcome. In conclusion, he said that he did not mention these difficulties in any carping spirit, but in order to obtain information upon important points.

Mr PERCY KNOTT (Bolton) could not see why it should be necessary to transfer the tramps to another authority. Why should not Guardians exercise the powers they already possessed, and deal with the vagrants in a proper uniform manner? If there was uniformity of treatment, as was possible now, the men would know what to expect. In Bolton the tramps had been greatly reduced. Police control would not be an improvement, and to separate the tramp and his wife would provide opportunities for desertion.

Mr H. BRITTAN (Barrow-in-Furness) agreed with the proposal to introduce farm colonies, but hoped the Conference would seriously take into consideration the proposed transfer to the police. Guardians and their officers had a long experience in dealing with this class, and police treatment would be likely to be harsh and unsatisfactory. If Guardians would carry out their duties properly there would be no need for the change. He referred to the success achieved by the Salvation Army with its farm colonies, and believed that if these institutions were properly managed there would be a tendency to

raise the status of the tramps. Personally, he would have liked to have heard more in the paper with regard to the manufacture of paupers. Casual labour was largely responsible for the making of vagrants and to put workers, who perhaps had failed through no fault of their own, under police supervision, hardly seemed the proper course. Many of the vagrants, being brought up in bad surroundings, never had a chance in life, and it seemed strange that in a country with the vast wealth mentioned by the President the previous day, that something could not be done to raise them, something better than handing them over to the police who dealt with the criminal population. He hoped the Conference would be firm in opposing the proposed transfer to the police, and urge ameliorative measures by means of farm colonies. By this means the desired uniformity could be obtained.

Mr J. ISHERWOOD (Bury) agreed that the Report of the Departmental Committee was excellent in many respects. It tabulated the law and much valuable information, and on many points they would all be agreed with the Committee. But he failed to see that the paper had in any way substantiated the claim that the control of the Poor Law authorities over the vagrants should be transferred to the police. Apparently, reading from the paper, the treatment of the casuals by the police would be exactly the same as now, except that the task, diet, and attention should be uniform. Why could that not be done as well under the Local Government Board as under the Home Office? If such a regulation were made it could be carried out by the present authorities quite as well as by the police. Besides, even under the Committee's recommendation they would not be entirely under the police control, and the police authorities would not be so directly under the control of the Home Office as Guardians were under the control of the Local Government Board. In fact, the Local Government Board had really more opportunities for securing uniform treatment than had the Home Office. It was admitted in the paper that the offences of the vagrant were due more to his mode of life than to criminal intent, then why hand them over to the authority which had to do with the detection of crime? Sir William Chance also said that the vagrant should not be dealt with by the Guardians because their duties were primarily for the care of poor and the relief of destitution. Vagrants and tramps came essentially within these definitions. If the vagrant wards were to be taken over by the police, there would arise conflict in many cases owing to Guardians having a certain amount of control of the wards. Hospital accommodation would also have to be provided, and machinery would be required for the identification of clothing and so on. An honest wayfarer would not like or deserve to be brought into contact with the police, who were supposed to be a criminal agency. He agreed as to the proposed labour colonies, but believed these could be just as well administered by a combination of Unions as by a county council or other body. It had never been proposed that

each Union should have its own labour colony, which was too small an area altogether. He therefore moved: "That whilst approving generally of the Departmental Committee's Report, this Conference disagrees with the proposal that the police authority should be substituted for the Poor Law authority." The great argument in favour of transference was that uniformity would be secured, but this would never be the case, because some magistrates would only convict for short and others only for long periods. The taking of fingerprints was a very simple matter, and that could be done by those in charge of tramp wards at present. He agreed as to the usefulness of way-tickets, and that there could be beneficial co-operation with the police, but there had been no case made out for complete transference as was suggested in the Committee's Report.

Miss HERTZ (Chorlton) said that her experience had led to the conclusion that the present condition of things was unsatisfactory. Guardians had not been successful in dealing with the tramps, although the present treatment was a great improvement. There were many tramps who did not need repressive treatment, though there were many who ought to have it in a greater degree than they did, but at first blush one felt it was un-English to hand these people over to the police. One heard so much about police treatment in Germany that we did not want the thin end of the wedge introduced here. But unless there was complete separation from the Poor Law she felt there would be great difficulties in dealing with the tramps as proposed, though she agreed that the tramp ward was not the place for women and children. She hardly felt qualified to say whether there would be more uniformity under the police than under the Poor Law. Very likely there would be, because the police everywhere worked more together and consulted each other more than the Boards of Guardians did. The police, too, generally had better training for their work. In view of the present unsatisfactory position, it might be worth while to try the transference by way of experiment, though she did not know whether that could be done. As to labour colonies, these were not successful as carried on abroad. The experience of labour colonies in this country was very small, and it might be desirable to start with those now existing rather than to create new ones under police management. She did not know whether there would be room in the new colonies for compulsory cases, but the result in this direction abroad had been disappointing. In Germany colonists could not get employment outside the colonies; no one would employ them, and something of the same kind might happen in England. The men would then be forced to go back to the colony. She did not think the Conference was prepared to say that these people should be permanently committed to a colony. The penal colonies in Holland and Belgium were very much the same as those in Germany. It seemed to be the invariable experience that association with a colony told against the colonist. Under these circumstances they could hardly help feeling that in under-

taking colonies they would be starting an expensive experiment which would lead to few good results.

Mr DEAN (Ulverston) seconded Mr Isherwood's motion, and joined in the tribute to the excellence of the paper, although he entirely dissented from the view that the management and control of vagrants should be transferred to the police. The police primarily had to deal with criminals, and they had no right to hand over to criminal agents persons who are not in essence and intention criminals. Taking him all through the tramp was not a criminal, his offence being that he did not work, and was in a filthy and dirty condition, loafing about the country. He thought they should consider more the causes of vagrancy, and try to devise some human and rational means of remedying the evil. It had been suggested that the police would be better able to deal with vagrants than the Guardians, who were incompetent. He suggested that the Boards of Guardians had mismanaged the tramps, not through any fault of their own, but because the law was defective. The Act of 1882 was an absolute failure, and he favoured the proposal to form a combination of Unions to deal with the tramps. He thought they should try to get the necessary authority to carry that into effect rather than advocate transference to the police. The suggestion that the tramps should be dealt with by voluntary agencies was impracticable, and the evil being a national one should be dealt with as a part of the national duty. On these lines, something practical and useful might be accomplished.

Mr R. A. LEACH (Rochdale) said that they were all agreed that the Conference was exceedingly indebted to Sir William Chance for his paper, although they might largely disagree with his conclusions. In supporting the motion, he desired to reply to one observation of Miss Hertz, who suggested that the treatment of tramps by the Guardians had been a failure, and that it might be worth while to try the police experiment. There was a clear line of demarcation in the present law dealing with vagrants—it was partly a police law and partly a Poor Law law, and when the Departmental Committee was appointed it was composed of representatives of the Home Office and of the Local Government Board. Having in mind what was already on the statute book, he did not think any new law was required, and certainly he did not agree that the Poor Law treatment of the tramp had been the failure it had been represented sometimes. Guardians had to deal with the destitute, and the tramp came within that definition. There was nothing now to prevent the police dealing with the criminal wayfarer, and the failure was that the present treatment of the tramp was not sufficiently reformatory. He did not believe that by a transference to the police they would find a solution of the problem. When he entered the Poor Law service forty years ago this same question was under discussion, and he believed that the tramp was going on right through the ages. Mr Jenner-Fust had pointed out many practical difficulties in the way of the new

proposal, and there was also the question of increasing the public expense, for that was what transference would really mean. They must remember in this connection that rates and taxes came from labour, and this suggested change would mean additional public expense for buildings and supervision—an outlay which he did not believe would be justified by any success which could be reasonably expected.

Mr KNOWLES (Manchester), in justice to the police, pointed out that police duty included much work that was not of a criminal character, and he thought they ought to have sufficient confidence in the police to believe that they could properly look after the vagrants with sympathy. Something should certainly be done for the *bona fide* workman in search of work, and he instanced the German method of dealing with this class. The benefits received under that system were properly regarded not as charity but as the result of labour. The police had much better communication between the towns than the Guardians, and were in a position to be able to quickly satisfy themselves as to a tramp's real character. He did not think Guardians could reach the tramp class, and the police assistance with labour bureaux would be of material benefit to the genuine workman. Good work was being done at the Hadleigh colony, and he preferred to see men given a chance with work in the open air, which improved them morally and physically. They ought to look upon the police as possible friends of the out-of-works, and that they should endeavour to do something which would hasten the establishment of national labour bureaux, training colonies, and similar corrective institutions.

Mr HENLEY (Bury) observed that this question had been raised at the first Poor Law Conference he had attended, and it had been discussed ever since. As a result of the Bolton policy, the Bury vagrants had increased in number. He deprecated any feelings of local jealousy between the various authorities and Boards of Guardians, and thought if such feeling could be got rid of they would be in a better position to arrive at a solution of the problem. If Guardians' treatment had not succeeded, then let them try the police and endeavour to obtain some uniformity of treatment.

The PRESIDENT expressed himself somewhat in agreement with Mr Henley, and suggested that words should be added to the resolution in favour of the adoption of a more uniform system of treatment by the combination of Unions or otherwise without loss of time.

Dr RHODES pointed out that the problem was extremely complex. It had troubled the Chinese 2,500 years ago; East and West both had endeavoured to deal with it, and the problem still remained to be solved. Looking at the question all round, it seemed to him they had better try a combination of Unions before placing the vagrants in other hands altogether. He had every respect for the police, but the more he studied the Report of the Departmental Committee the

more he was of opinion that the proposed dual control of the tramp class would not succeed. These poor creatures were of a degenerate type, and the tasks to which they were put, particularly stone-breaking, were unsuitable altogether.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE pointed out that the task was recorded by time and not by amount.

Dr RHODES replied that this would not mean uniformity, and asked what was to be done with the tramp before the meeting of the Quarter Sessions. It would be hard to keep a man in jail all the time.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE said he was to be remanded to the casual ward.

Dr RHODES contended that in any arrangement great hardship would be involved. Good work was being done by some of the labour colonies, and having seen nearly all of them, he contended that the State colony was preferable and superior to those in Europe managed by voluntary agencies. He knew of one which was exceptionally bad, and in Germany the colony had not led to a diminution in the number of tramps. Switzerland had not found a solution of the problem. A great deal of good was being done by trade unions in issuing travelling tickets. There were many difficulties in the way of the proposed change, which he regarded as unworkable, and he hoped that the whole question would be thrashed out at many other Poor Law Conferences, so doing something to benefit a low type of their fellow-men.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE, replying to the debate, said the tramp question really dated back from 1834 so far as Guardians were concerned, before which date Boards of Guardians were not in existence, and all this was carefully explained in the historical summary of the Committee's Report. He denied that there was any attack upon Guardians in the Report, but the difficulty was that Boards of Guardians held different opinions upon the treatment of tramps, and there could not be any uniformity in the present system. The Local Government Board had again and again been asked to do something in the matter, and that Board had always replied that they could do nothing, that the whole matter remained with the Boards of Guardians to carry out the Poor Law Orders. The effect was that those Orders were not carried out. The way-ticket system now only survived in two counties, Wilts and Gloucester, other counties declining to be bothered with it any longer. If they established combinations of Unions the same thing would happen, Boards of Guardians would gradually slip out until the system relapsed into its former state. The proposal was one to endeavour to secure uniformity of treatment, which would be a great step. Personally he had always felt it a great pity the vagrant was recognised as a vagrant instead of being treated in the ordinary way as a destitute person. This had been advocated by Mr Albert Pell, Mr Vallance, and other eminent authorities, but the Royal Commission or House of Lords Com-

mittee in 1888 would not adopt the suggestion, although evidence in that direction was given. The House of Lords Committee reported unanimously against it, why he did not know. There seemed to be an objection to mix them up with the settled poor. He did not know whether the vagrant would be better under the police, but at any rate he could not be worse. There was a greater chance of uniformity under the police, because the Local Government Board could not bring all the Boards of Guardians into line. But the question wanted fair consideration, and the change should not be made in a hurry.

Mr ISHERWOOD suggested that the Local Government Board could insist upon Guardians treating tramps in a uniform manner. Uniformity was secured in other directions and why not in this?

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE agreed that it might be done, although there was great difficulty in securing uniformity in regard to the administration of relief. Good work was being done in some of the present colonies which might well be utilised to some extent, but they would have to conform to strict regulations for the management of these people. The difficulties which had been suggested as to dual control raised matters of detail which he believed would be capable of adjustment. He did not think there was any real objection to the police dealing with this class because of their other duties, and they might be well given this control seeing that they already did other work than strictly police work, as, for instance, in the issue of pedlars' licenses.

Rev. J. GARDNER suggested a further addition to the motion, that the colonies should be a national charge.

The PRESIDENT ruled that could be put as a separate motion. When he first saw the Committee's Report he was in favour of it, but the more he looked into it, and after the discussion that day, he saw practical difficulties in the way of carrying out the Committee's recommendation. They must admit that the present system was a failure and there was no uniformity. Last year there were more tramps in the casual wards than there ever had been before, and a large number unfortunately were old soldiers. But they should not sit down and say they could do nothing. That was not the spirit of Englishmen. He thought good would result if all the Boards of Guardians in Lancashire and Cheshire were to meet in conference on the subject of combination. There was no chance of dealing with it without combination. It was useless to make the transfer to the police unless there was also combination of the police, though it might be more easy to get a combination of twenty police authorities than of thirty Boards of Guardians. It had been suggested that there was a difficulty in working a joint-committee. As the chairman of three joint-committees he had not found this to be the case. He wanted the vagrant to have a chance of reform, repressive measures clearly having failed, and that chance could not be given under the present system. Every one had some good in him. He suggested

an improvement would be in the vagrant having to apply to the police for his order instead of to the Workhouse master. The police would be in a position to discriminate between the honest wayfarer and the semi-criminal class. Discrimination was required, and he was in favour of colonies being provided by the State, because the tramp really belonged to the State and not to the Union. The tramp should be given a chance of reform which he had not got to-day. There was very wide ground for improvement in the present system.

Mr Isherwood's motion was then carried by 47 votes to 13.

On the motion of Dr RHODES, seconded by Mr CROSSLEY, it was resolved to add words suggested by the President, viz., "But is of opinion that an improved and more uniform system of dealing with vagrants, either by combination of Unions or otherwise, should be adopted without loss of time."

On the motion of Dr RHODES a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to Sir William Chance, who acknowledged the compliment.

The HON. SECRETARY presented a formal report from the Committee appointed by the Conference two years ago to consider the question of the classification of Workhouses, containing information collected from various Unions.

VOTES OF THANKS.

On the motion of the PRESIDENT, seconded by Dr RHODES, a vote of thanks was accorded to the Mayor and Corporation of Chester for the use of the town hall.

Rev. J. P. CORT (Bucklow) proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the President, and referred to Sir John's thirty-two years' chairmanship of the Conference and his long and honoured public career.

Dr RHODES seconded, and the motion was carried with acclamation.

Sir JOHN T. HIBBERT acknowledged the compliment, mentioning the fact that he was eighty-two years of age. His recollections of the thirty-two years over which he had presided at that gathering were of the most pleasant description, and he was glad to think the work of the Conference all the time had been useful and important. He proposed a hearty vote of thanks to the Hon. Secretary, and expressed the hope that Mr Hagger might long be spared to give them the benefit of his unique experience and great ability.

Mr R. A. LEACH seconded the motion, which was carried with applause.

Mr H. J. HAGGER, in replying, mentioned that he had attained his seventy-eighth birthday, and said that it was a pleasure to be able to still assist the proceedings.

The Conference then terminated.

In the afternoon the delegates enjoyed a drive to Hawarden.

North Midland District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

EIGHTEENTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE NORTH MIDLAND DISTRICT, COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF DERBY, LEICESTER, LINCOLN, NOT-
TINGHAM, AND RUTLAND, HELD AT THE POOR
LAW OFFICES, DERBY, ON THE 10TH AND 11TH
OCTOBER 1906.

President—Rev. H. R. ROLFE,
Chairman, Derby Board of Guardians.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

DERBYSHIRE.

ASHBOURNE—

Finney, Thos.
Jackson, F. (Chairman).
Wooddisse, Thos.

BELPER—

Bown, Joseph (Vice-Chairman).
Pym, Joseph (Clerk).

CHAPEL-EN-LE-FRITH—

Nall, Dr J.
Richardson, Thos.

CHESTERFIELD—

Kendall, C.
Saway, W. T.

DERBY—

Blount, H. J.
Browne, Canon.
Beresford, Mrs M. A.
Bushall, G. J. (Master).
Chapman, Mrs L.
Cholerton, J.
Dickinson, J.
Grantham, R. (Assistant-Clerk).

DERBY—continued—

Innes, Geo.
Longdon, Miss C. M.
Potter, James.
Rolfe, Rev. H. R. (Chairman).
Sargent, W. H.
Simpson, Mrs. E. A.
Thwaite, F. M.
Twigge, N. (Clerk).
Vaudrey, Miss E. E.
Walker, J. H.
Wright, A.

GLOSSOP—

Flowerdew, E.
Waterhouse, E.

HAYFIELD—

Bradbury, William
Parsons, W.

SHARDLOW—

Bennett, W. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Finney, R. (Chairman).
Mugliston, W. L.
Newbold, J. W. (Clerk).

312 NORTH MIDLAND DISTRICT CONFERENCE.

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.

LEICESTERSHIRE.

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH—
Adcock, J. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Massey, Wilmot.
Pratt, Mrs E.

BARROW-ON-SOAR—
Forward, Thomas (Clerk).
Johnson, R. W.
Ilsley, Henry.

BLABY—
Shield, Eleanor.

LEICESTER—
Herne, F. S.
Holland, A. F.
Mansfield, H. (Clerk).
Moore, Geo. W.

LOUGHBOROUGH—
Burrows, John W.
Handley, Thomas.

LUTTERWORTH—
Glover, Wilfred.
Wildman, W.

MARKET HARBOROUGH—
Gardiner, J. T.
Smeeton, J. (Vice-Chairman).

LINCOLNSHIRE.

BOURNE—
Ayre, Edward.
Clark, Edward.

GLANFORD BRIGG.
Godfrey, Rev. Geo.
Heath, Samuel (Vice-Chairman).

GRIMSBY—
Jeffs, C. (Vice-Chairman).
Southworth, W. (Chairman).
Watson, H. W. (Assistant-Clerk).

LINCOLN—*continued*—

LINCOLN—
Codling, George.
Overton, W. (Vice-Chairman).

SLEAFORD—
Harris, D. G.
Smith, H. Powell.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.

BASFORD—
Bentley, John.
Dern, Samuel.
Harrison, Rev. C.

MANSFIELD—
Redfearn, R.

NOTTINGHAM—
Guilford, Miss J.
Marlow, J.
Ward, Thomas.

SOUTHWELL—
Alvey, John.
Townson, J.

WORKSOP—
Guest, Wm.
Stour, Geo.

STAFFORDSHIRE.

BURTON-ON-TRENT—
Barber, J. L. P. (Chairman).
Christian, H.
Eley, Alfred.
Finney, T.

YORKSHIRE.

ECCLESALL BIERLOW—
Blossom, James.
Barker, Claude.
Smith, Thomas (Clerk).

VISITORS.

The Mayor of Derby (Sir E. T. Ann).
Dearden, Allan (Ecclesall Bierlow).
Mrs Ramsay (Fareham, Hants).
Hon. Gerald Walsh, L.G.B. Inspector.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

DERBYSHIRE.—Bakewell.

LEICESTERSHIRE.—Billesdon, Hinckley, Market Bosworth, and Melton Mowbray.

LINCOLNSHIRE.—Boston, Caistor, Gainsborough, Grantham, Holbeach, Horn-castle, Louth, Spalding, Spilsby, Stamford.

NOTTINGHAMSHIRE.—Bingham, East Retford, and Newark.

RUTLANDSHIRE.—Oakham and Uppingham.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
OUTDOOR RELIEF. By Mrs RAMSAY, <i>Guardian, Fareham Union</i>	316
Do. By Mr ALLAN DEARDEN, <i>Superintendent, Out Relief, Ecclesall Bierlow Union</i> - - -	338
REPORT OF DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY. By Mr THOMAS PALMER, <i>Guardian, Parish of Nottingham</i> -	361
Do. By Mr F. W. MEE, <i>Clerk, Hunslet Union</i> -	374

WEDNESDAY, 10TH OCTOBER.

WELCOME BY THE MAYOR.

The MAYOR of DERBY (Sir Edwin Ann) said it afforded him great pleasure to be present that afternoon to welcome the delegates in attendance. (Hear, hear.) He knew of no more honourable people in public life than members of Boards of Guardians, and no people who were more grumbled at or received less thanks for the work they did. (Hear, hear.) The difficulties they had to face were many, and one in particular was the red tapeism of the Local Government Board. (Hear, hear.) Their duties were onerous and very important, for they were looked upon as a body whose work it was to feed the starving portion of the population of this country, to find sufficient money to do it, and to spend it wisely. Personally, he hoped the time would come when there would be a reasonable old age pension for all, and when there would be no large palatial buildings for housing the poor as at present. When "the sword was turned into the ploughshare" he hoped these great buildings would be turned into workshops and secondary schools. (Hear, hear.) With regard to the Derby Board of Guardians, he thought they had the very best in the country. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) As Mayor of the borough he had much pleasure in welcoming the delegates, as he had already said, and he hoped their Conference would result in the further alleviation of the sufferings of the poor, with, as far as possible, a diminution of the rates. (Hear, hear.)

Mr R. FINNEY (Shardlow) moved a hearty vote of thanks to the Mayor for the kind way in which he had welcomed those present. Sir Edwin had told them that he had no knowledge of Poor Law matters, but as one who knew Sir Edwin, and had worked with him, he could assure them that he had a full knowledge of everything that tended to benefit the poor. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT seconded the motion, and said they were particularly indebted to the Mayor of Derby for his presence, as he had postponed a visit to Bristol (his native city) in order to be with them. (Hear, hear.) The motion was then put, and carried with applause.

The MAYOR, in returning thanks, assured them that such a motion was quite unnecessary.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

The Hon. SECRETARY said that he had received a telegram from Sir Thomas Roe, M.P., who regretted that he could not be with them. He had also received letters from Sir Walter Foster, M.P., Mr Victor Cavendish, M.P., and Mr Richard Bell, M.P.

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

I am sure that I am but voicing what you would all wish to say, when I express my great regret at the inability of the Duke of Devonshire to be present and to be your Chairman. Eleven years ago, his Grace presided at a similar Conference in this town, and his address on that occasion is still remembered as one of great ability and practical usefulness. (Hear, hear.) I cannot but feel that my position in the chair needs some apology, and I certainly could not have undertaken the office but for two reasons—(1) that it was the unanimous wish of the North Midland Conference Committee, and (2) that I feel that I can rely upon the kindly assistance and forbearance of the Conference in carrying out the duties of the chair. (Hear, hear.) But you will not expect an elaborate address from one who has no claim to speak as an authority on Poor Law work, other than that possessed by many here present, *i.e.*, length of service. I do not propose to take up your valuable time in any review of work or statistics, but simply to confine my few remarks to one subject, which is doubtless in the minds of most of us, *viz.*, that we meet during the sitting of a Royal Commission appointed to inquire into the whole of Poor Law administration. I think we may have every confidence in the members of the Commission and its excellent chairman, Lord George Hamilton. We must all acknowledge that the appointment of this Commission has not been made any too soon. It is more than seventy years since the last Royal Commission reported, with such excellent results; we trust that equally good work may be accomplished now. The results of that work, whatever they may be, will have far-reaching effects, and will in some degree affect the whole community. (Hear, hear.) It is not for me to forecast the recommendations which may be made, but there is the possibility of a very serious result. There is the danger of the abolition of Boards of Guardians, that we should cease to exist as specially elected bodies for the purpose of guarding the interests of the poor. This is no imaginary danger, for there are many who believe that centralisation of public work is the great thing, that in this direction we shall find greater economy and efficiency—but, I would ask, does experience bear this out? In my opinion it would be disastrous if Boards of Guardians should be converted into mere committees of the Borough or County Councils. (Hear, hear.) In

the interests alike of the poor and the ratepayers, I earnestly hope that this may not be one result of the labours of the present Commission. I think we ought to unite our forces, that we may be able effectually to resist any such proposal. (Hear, hear.) And here comes in the great value of the Poor Law Unions' Association, and the advisability of all the Boards throughout the country belonging thereto. If we present a united front, the danger, which certainly threatens us, may be averted. Well, if we are permitted to continue our work, which, on the whole, I contend has been well done by Guardians, at the expenditure of much time, trouble, and self-sacrifice, though we get small recognition for these good qualities, then I trust that we shall not be deprived of those powers and duties which now belong to us. But I would make one exception—I should rejoice if we were relieved of the duty of carrying out the Vaccination Laws, unless indeed the anomaly of our present position is removed. (Hear, hear.) As regards the reforms which we hope will result from the work of the Royal Commission, may I mention two or three. First and foremost I put the codification of the Poor Law. Most of us know that the present state of affairs can only be represented by one word, "chaos." We are told that there are nearly 400 Acts of Parliament and about 5,000 decisions of judges bearing on our work, with which we unfortunate Guardians are supposed to be acquainted. There are, besides, general orders of the Local Government Board, and the Boards which preceded it. So that if all these various statutes, decisions, and orders were printed together they would fill five large volumes. There can be no question that this enormous amount of matter should be condensed, simplified, and suitably arranged and indexed. This would be a great boon. The second thing we may hope for is the relaxation of the control exercised by the central authority. We are only too familiar with the pettifogging interference with the details of our work and the vexatious delays which occur in consequence of the procedure of the Local Government Board. This control is far more stringent than over any other representative Board or Council charged with the administration of local affairs. With recent revelations in mind, it would be impossible to suggest that there should be no control exercised by a central board; but surely it should be modified to meet the altered conditions which prevail to-day. What was suitable in 1834 is out of place in 1906. Sir John Hibbert, who is well known as a great authority in Poor Law, says, "I have a strong opinion that the time has come when the control may be relaxed—a vast quantity of correspondence between the central board and the Guardians might be avoided if fuller powers were given to Poor Law Inspectors." And again, "Local authorities are not children, and they ought to be free from some of the trammels which now oppress them." A third point is, that we ought to have wider powers in connection with certain parts of our work. I give two examples: (1) There should be power to remove to the Workhouse those sick and infirm paupers

who cannot be properly cared for outside, just as the Sanitary Authority can remove infectious cases to the isolation hospital. (2) We ought to be able, under proper safeguards, to detain in the Workhouse those who are constantly going in and out, and also those whom the doctor cannot certify to be imbeciles, but yet are weak-minded, and quite incapable of taking care of themselves. I give these as examples, probably the desirability of wider powers in other directions may suggest themselves to you. Another point, and it is the last, is this, that there should be a revision of the amount paid from the national exchequer in the matter of officers' salaries and the Agricultural Rates Act; and further, that a grant should be made from the same source for chronic, harmless lunatics now confined in our Workhouses, similar to that given for lunatics in asylums.

Mrs RAMSAY (Fareham) then read the following paper—

OUTDOOR RELIEF.

By Mrs FLORENCE RAMSAY,

Guardian, Fareham Union.

WHEN I was asked to read a paper on outdoor relief at this Conference, I hesitated greatly before accepting the task for several reasons. First, the magnitude of the subject. Secondly, the all but impossibility of saying anything that is new, and the difficulty of selection from the material at hand. And last, but not least, my own conviction that any opinion I could express would be but an echo of what has been said by those of larger experience and knowledge than myself.

However, I remembered that "damnable iteration" has its uses, and that the best music finds its way into the minds and memories of the multitude, principally through repetition by performers by no means always of the first rank, and I overcame my hesitation.

I hope you will be indulgent to my effort to deal with this question.

The subject of outdoor relief is a large one, indeed it is almost commensurate with the whole field of Poor Law questions.

Our Poor Law being but the expression of the national will that no one shall starve, all its complicated

provisions are only different parts of the machinery devised to carry out that will ; and it appears to me that under the multitude of details that occupy the minds of those concerned in administering the law, there is at bottom only one large vital question left them for decision.

Is it best to give the food, shelter, and care, prescribed by the Law in institutions established for that purpose ; or to provide for the necessities of the people in their own homes ?

In other words :—Should relief to the destitute be given inside or outside the Workhouse ?

On this fundamental point every Board and every individual Guardian must decide for themselves. Not only may, but must. For in spite of the many Orders, prohibitive and permissive, issued at various times by the Local Government Board, in reality an immense latitude is allowed to Boards of Guardians on this fundamental question of outdoor relief. It may seem unpractical, but so important is this question that I am of opinion that one of the first and chief duties of a Guardian is to study it thoroughly, not only on its merits in his own small district, but in its incidence and effect all over the country—its history in the past, and its working at the present day.

It is, of course, impossible to go into history within the space of a paper of this kind, but I would recommend anyone who does not care to grapple with the standard "History of the English Poor Law," written by Sir G. Nicholls, and brought up to date by Mr Mackay—three large volumes—to read Sir Wm. Chance's little books, "The Better Administration of the Poor Law," and "Our Treatment of the Poor," both of which contain very striking examples of the effect of strict and lax administration in various places. "The English Poor" and "Public Relief of the Poor," by Thomas Mackay, are also very useful books.

Nothing is more striking to anyone trying to make

themselves acquainted with the working of our Poor Law than the immense contrast between various Unions, and the different effects produced by the same system, dealing with the necessities of populations that do not differ very much, if at all, in character, and but slightly in local conditions.

When the present Poor Law was passed in 1834 it is probable that localities differed much more than they do now, and possibly when the "something" we all expect from the Royal Commission now sitting is done, measures may be taken to ensure greater uniformity.

But I do not propose to go into that. We Guardians have to take our Poor Law as we find it; and at the risk of being tedious, I must repeat that our only chance of worthily carrying out our trust as almoners of the nation is to study that law carefully as a whole, before proceeding to administer it in detail.

Looking down the columns of statistics of pauperism supplied us by the Inspectors of the Local Government Board, we find that the proportion of paupers per thousand of population varies as much as from 41.4 (Hereford) to 18.8 (Middlesex) in "Union Counties." Separate Unions vary much more, some being as low as 11 per 1,000, and others going up to 50 and 60. Poplar in London has 69. The ratio of outdoor to indoor pauperism also differs very much. To take a few instances: Stepney, percentage of outdoor to total paupers, 20; Poplar, 68; Marylebone, 11; Ashbourne in Derbyshire, 82; Atcham, Staffordshire, 18; Poole, Dorset, 88; Tenbury, Worcestershire, 52.1; and Penrith, 15.

The cost per head on population varies from 16s. 3d. to 4s. 11d. in "Union Counties," and again much more in individual Unions; the highest and lowest I have found are 26s. 11d. and 1s. 9d. respectively.

Often the difference between adjacent Unions is immense.

Take for instance Bradfield—the classic Bradfield

—in Berkshire, which has 15 paupers per 1,000, with a population of 18,117, and Newbury next door, which has 27 paupers per 1,000, with a population of 21,857. Cost per head of population—Bradfield, 1s. 11d., and Newbury, 4s. 3d. Then in the Metropolitan area :—Paddington, 13 paupers per 1,000, population, 147,976; Marylebone, 31 paupers per 1,000, population, 133,301. Cost per head of population—Paddington, 7s. 2d., and Marylebone, 17s. 2d. I have made a little table (see Table I., on next page) of a few Unions showing the great variations that exist, in a form easy to follow. I will not trouble you by reading it, and only remark in passing that the average proportion of paupers per 1,000 all over England and Wales on January 1905 was 27.6, and beg you to observe that very often in those Unions in which outdoor relief is lavishly given there is a high rate of total pauperism. So that lavish outdoor relief does not, as often asserted, empty the Workhouse.

It is impossible to suppose that the amount of indigent people really requiring support from the rates can vary as much as this, and the fact that the difference between Unions is much greater than that between districts goes very far towards proving the conclusion arrived at long ago, and accepted ever since by those best qualified to judge, namely :—That Poor Law administration has almost as much influence in increasing or decreasing the pauperism of a place as economic conditions.

The latter would not vary very much in neighbouring Unions, but would do so over large areas, while administration can, and does, vary immensely in Unions next door to each other, even though local conditions be the same.

If we admit that this conclusion is so far correct, I think we cannot avoid the further inference that whereas outdoor relief is the point on which individual Boards have most discretionary power, so their policy

with regard to it is likely to influence the wellbeing of the whole of their Union more than anything else connected with their administration. Indeed, it seems obvious that the administration of outdoor relief must

TABLE I.

INSTANCES OF VARIATION OF RATIO OF PAUPERISM TO POPULATION, AND COST PER HEAD ON POPULATION (Lunatics and Vagrants omitted).

Union.	Census 1901.	Percentage In-to Out-door Paupers.		Ratio p. 1,000 of Popula- tion.	Cost per Head on Population.	County.
		In.	Out.			
*Bucklow -	79.595	38.1	61.9	14	1/0½	Cheshire
*Ousebourne (Great) -	9.574	40.3	59.7	15	1/9½	Yorkshire
*Kendal -	43.480	50	50	19	3/1	Westmorland
*Bridgnorth -	14.485	37.7	62.2	22	1/9½	Salop
*Ashbourne -	19.892	17.9	82.1	23	1/10½	Derbyshire
*Poole -	32.335	12	88	41	8/9	Dorsetshire
*Honiton -	20.285	12	88	42	5/2½	Devonshire
*Chipping Norton -	16.004	15	85	53.6	6/7½	Oxfordshire
*Preston -	152.231	49	51	14	2/1½	Lancashire
*Manchester -	132.316	71	29	43	7/3½	
† METROPOLITAN AREA.						
Fulham -	137.289	64	36	13	7/	London Area
Woolwich -	131.086	72	28	15	7/4	"
Hammersmith	112.239	56	44	16	15/8	"
Kensington -	176.628	85	15	17	10/6	"
Bermondsey -	130.760	53	47	50	£1/6/11	"
Holborn -	129.434	64	36	52	£1/10/3	"
Camberwell -	359.339	42	58	31	11/6	"
Poplar -	168.822	32	68	69	18/6	"

* All the above figures are taken from the Reports of the Local Government Board Inspector for the various districts. Date, January 1905.

† The Metropolitan figures are taken from Mr Charles Booth's figures. Date, January 1905.

in the nature of things have a wide reaching effect. As Mr Wodehouse pointed out in one of his reports to the Local Government Board:—"Every case in which outdoor relief is granted has a direct tendency to encourage other persons to apply for similar assistance, while the offer of relief in the Workhouse is not attended with the same consequences to any appreciable extent." As a matter of fact, a large proportion of applicants for relief refuse it when "the House" is offered them, and prefer to continue to rely on their own resources. Some authorities say that only about one in ten accept the offer of the House; and there is no doubt that, however comfortable our Workhouses may be made, they will never be as attractive to the poor as outdoor relief.

Being able to look forward with fair certainty to getting a small sum to spend outside, when other means fail, discourages and prevents thrift in a way that the prospect of shelter in the Workhouse will never do. Moreover, in every place where outdoor relief can be easily obtained, there is created a very strong temptation to misrepresentation and fraud. So that it is no exaggeration to say that a lavish outdoor policy literally manufactures pauperism, and thus any Board of Guardians which gives this kind of relief without immense care is, in the long run, a very bad friend to the working people of their Union.

As the comparison of one Union with another is not quite satisfactory owing to differences of conditions and special circumstances impossible to tabulate, let us compare one Union with itself and see the effect of varying methods of administration within its borders. I have taken two tables (with Sir William Chance's kind permission) from "The Better Administration of the Poor Law," pp. 80 and 81. One gives details with regard to five Unions which for years gave practically no outdoor relief, and the other the same details of eight Unions which administered it very

strictly. Sir William Chance's book was published in 1895, and the latest figures were for 1893. He has now brought them up to date, and by this means they are made to point a double lesson. In the early seventies these Unions adopted an indoor policy, with the result shown by the figures for 1893. At the present time all these same Unions show an increase in pauperism. In Paddington this may be partly accounted for by the transfer to it of a very poor district from Chelsea, and there may be some small differences which I have been unable to discover in the condition of the other Unions; but there is no doubt

TABLE II.

MEAN PAUPERISM.

1. Of five Unions which for many years gave practically no permanent Outdoor Relief.

Union.	Year ending Lady Day.	Population Census year.	Indoor Paupers.	Outdoor Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Proportion per 1000.
Stepney - {	1871	57,578	887	2,830	3,717	64.5
	1893	57,376	1,004	146	1,150	20.04
	1905	57,937	1,572	475	2,047	35.3
White-chapel - {	1871	76,332	1,081	3,281	4,362	57.1
	1893	74,462	1,071	120	1,191	15.9
	1905	78,768	1,417	65	1,482	18.8
Brixworth - {	1871	13,856	55	1,056	1,111	80.1
	1893	12,186	57	19	76	6.2
	1905	11,829	74	144	218	18.4
Bradfield (Berks) - {	1871	15,852	221	839	1,060	66.8
	1893	18,017	89	27	116	6.4
	1905	18,117	97	57	154	8.5
St George's in the East - {	1871	48,235	1,059	1,635	2,694	55.8
	1893	45,795	1,135	181	1,316	28.7
	1905	49,068	1,191	236	1,427	29.08

2. Of eight Unions which for many years administered Outdoor Relief strictly.

Union.	Year ending Lady Day.	Population Census year.	Indoor Paupers.	Out-door Paupers.	Total Paupers.	Proportion per 1000.
Atcham - {	1871	45,561	318	713	1,031	22.6
	1893	48,346	317	50	367	7.5
	1905	49,440	428	107	535	10.8
Paddington {	1871	96,784	568	1,782	2,347	24.2
	1893	117,846	793	251	1,044	8.8
	1905	143,976	1,280	431	1,711	11.8
Wallingford {	1871	14,641	141	757	898	61.3
	1893	14,706	117	91	208	14.1
	1905	13,786	132	109	241	17.4
St Neots - {	1871	18,511	112	721	839	45.3
	1893	15,239	71	151	222	14.5
	1905	13,879	99	175	274	19.7
Manchester {	1871	173,965	2,606	3,238	5,844	33.5
	1893	145,100	3,076	688	3,764	25.9
	1905	132,316	3,275	1,469	4,744	35.8
St George's, Hanover Square - {	1871	155,936	1,674	2,882	4,556	29.2
	1893	134,138	2,346	487	2,833	21.1
	1905	128,256	2,794	889	3,683	29.9
Birmingham {	1871	246,352	2,380	4,555	6,935	28.1
	1893	245,503	2,602	740	3,342	13.6
	1905	245,216	3,149	1,565	4,714	19.2
Reading - {	1871	43,494	387	601	988	22.7
	1893	60,054	459	114	573	9.5
	1905	72,217	508	600	1,108	15.3

The mean pauperism is obtained by taking the number of paupers on the 1st July and the 1st January in any one year ending Lady Day, adding the number together and dividing by 2.

that the chief reason for this increase is the one given by Mrs Calverley speaking of her own Union of Brixworth,* where the change is not accounted for by anything in the condition of the place. She says, "Since the passing of the Local Government Act of 1891 the policy of strict administration has been completely reversed in the Brixworth Union: the composition of the Board was wholly changed, eulogy of out-relief was a step to popularity, and many Guardians were elected on purpose that they might vote for it." This remark is amply corroborated by reports made at various times since the passing of the Act by Inspectors of the Local Government Board, and there is no gainsaying the fact that since that date, pauperism, especially outdoor pauperism, has increased without due relation to the fluctuations of the labour market, which must have been great during that period. I think it is not at all surprising that the election of a large number of new Guardians should have produced this result. Outdoor relief seems at the first blush very attractive. Those who have had no experience of its working find it impossible to believe in the evils it creates, and they require experience before they can be expected to see that the "discrimination" and "judgment of each case on its merits"—on which they rely to keep relief within due bounds—are very unreliable and deceptive tests. I trust that before long we may see experience bear fruit and react against this reaction.

I have added another little table in order to try and refute an argument that is often used, namely, that if one Union gives very little outdoor relief and has a low rate of pauperism, the poor go over the border rather than enter the House, and the population of the Union decreases, while that of adjoining Unions goes up.

* "The Downgrade," by Mary Calverley, 30th November 1897.

Six more or less "model" Unions have been taken, each with their surrounding Unions, and their population at the census of 1891 and 1901; the total pauperism of each, the number of in and outdoor paupers, and the ratio of pauperism to population. I have tried to take "model" Unions in widely different localities, and though I feel the disadvantage of being personally unacquainted with some of them, I think they are representative, and the inference drawn from the figures quite sound.

Perhaps I have spent too much time in attempting to prove what has already been proved over and over again, but I think that, in spite of the plain teaching of all history and statistics, great confusion still exists on this question.

Some Guardians are definitely in favour of strict administration, and a few give practically no outdoor relief, others (I think the large majority) are of opinion that outdoor relief is dangerous, but do not act up to their convictions very strictly, and a few advocate lavish outdoor relief.

Again, we all know that the law we are elected to carry out is intended to relieve destitution and not poverty, and has nothing to do with charity, yet in practice hardly any Boards act on this, and most of us Guardians, I am sure, are often conscious that we sometimes vote for relief being given in cases where it would certainly be refused if judged on the principles we ourselves profess.

To come from general principles to the practical details that have to be settled at every meeting of a Board or a Relief Committee—and assuming that the average Board is, as I said before, decidedly in favour of very careful administration of outdoor relief, and yet, somehow, does not manage to get this well carried out; and is also very much in favour of giving adequate relief, and against small doles, and yet does give many a half-crown per week that cannot possibly be

TABLE III.
TABLE OF "MODEL" UNIONS AND SURROUNDING UNIONS.

Union.	Population.		Increase.	Decrease.	Number of Paupers exclusive of Vagrants.			Total.	Ratio per 1000 of Population.
	1891.	1901.			Indoor.	Outdoor.	Lunatics.		
Bradfield (Berks) -	18,017	18,117	100	—	116	67	54	237	13.1
Wallingford -	14,706	13,786	—	920	161	115	45	321	23.3
Newbury -	21,456	21,057	—	390	174	323	87	584	13.9
Wantage -	16,549	15,608	—	941	109	458	43	610	14
Rhayader (Wales) -	6,421	9,347	2,926	—	28	132	Lunatics excluded	160	17
Kingston -	10,698	10,886	188	—	66	239		305	28
Newtown Llandidloes	21,722	21,115	—	607	74	624		698	33
Lampeter -	9,684	9,256	—	428	21	264		285	31
Bradford (Yorks) -	216,261	228,625	12,364	—	1,364	1,213	Lunatics excluded	2,577	11
Keighley -	69,239	77,463	8,224	—	346	1,051		1,397	18
Leeds -	222,154	254,536	31,382	—	1,675	4,245		5,920	23
Holbeck -	26,990	33,585	6,595	—	150	592		751	22

OUTDOOR RELIEF.

327

Atcham (Salop)	48,346	49,440	1,094	—	467	109	Lunatics excluded	576	12
Wellington	24,077	25,844	1,767	—	179	542		721	28
Shifnal	12,222	11,801	—	421	79	235		314	27
Drayton	14,196	13,849	—	347	48	226		274	20
Coventry (Warwick)	58,783	70,296	11,513	—	495	690	157	1,342	19.1
Meriden	10,894	11,346	452	—	76	251	35	362	31.9
Nuneaton	18,372	28,120	9,748	—	101	542	42	685	24.4
Rugby	27,464	34,328	6,864	—	152	683	69	904	20.3
Farnham (Surrey)	49,846	62,458	12,612	—	483	430	Lunatics excluded	913	14
Alton	15,146	16,345	1,199	—	197	361		558	34
Basingstoke	20,619	21,711	1,092	—	180	377		557	25
Guildford	50,915	62,122	12,007	—	454	594		1,238	19.9

These figures are all taken from the Reports of the Inspector of the Local Government Board for the various districts.
Date, January 1905.

adequate, and is undoubtedly in the nature of a dole—let us see what experience shows us to be the best means which such a Board can adopt, in order that its practice should at any rate not fall short of its own standard. I have no hesitation in saying that the chief necessity is for each individual Guardian, and consequently the Board as a whole, to possess “an infinite capacity for taking pains.”

It is often said that a bad system well worked is better than a good one carelessly carried out, and if this be true at all, and I think it is, it must be true of the work of Guardians; work dealing as it does, especially in the matter of outdoor relief, with persons rather than things, and having to take into consideration all the devious characteristics of human nature, work which obviously calls for steady, unprejudiced judgment and infinite patience.

I do not mean, of course, that a good system and good rules are not important—only that the “personal equation” is possibly more so.

I fancy that on looking at the history of any well conducted Union we shall find that it owed its position in the first instance to the strong character and worthy perseverance of one or two men, as was notably the case at Atcham, where the late Sir Baldwyn Leighton was Chairman for so many years, and in Bradfield, where first Mr Stevens, and afterwards Mr Bland Garland’s consistent labour brought about what was little short of a revolution, with the result that pauperism decreased and prosperity increased in a most remarkable way.*

The methods that seem to have conducted most to good administration in various places are:—

1. The case-paper or history sheet system.

* See “Outdoor Relief,” a paper read by Mr Bland Garland at the Central Poor Law Conference on 6th December 1882, reprinted with all statistics brought down to date in 1887, and again printed by the Bradfield Guardians.

2. Strict revision of quarterly cases if any are allowed.
3. Compelling applicants who are not infirm to apply in person, or sign a statement of their case.
4. Inquiry from employers as to earnings.
5. Giving relief on loan in suitable cases.
6. Collection from relatives of even small sums, such as 3d. weekly.
7. A sufficient staff of officers.
8. Co-operation with charities in the district.
9. Fixed rules for giving outdoor relief.

Now most of these things are acted on more or less by all Boards, and carrying them out in full is something like tuning an instrument to full pitch and keeping it there. It means incessant, unremitting vigilance. I have, I am sorry to say, no personal experience of the case-paper system, but it has been a matter of wonder to me since I first heard of it why it has not been adopted everywhere.

I may have a specially bad memory; certainly I cannot recollect accurately the history of all the cases that have come up even in our small Union during my twelve years as a Guardian, and I do not believe anyone else does. The Relieving Officer may, but let him be changed, and under the present system all past records are lost, or at least so buried in files of old books, that they are never exhumed. Yet what can be more important, especially where cases are taken "on their merits," and character is given great weight, than an accurate knowledge of the past connection of every applicant with the Poor Law.*

Some Unions have, I believe, adopted this system for children only. I think this might be a good way

* See "The History Sheet or Case-Paper System," by Miss James, Guardian, Bethnal Green, read at the S.E. Poor Law Conference, December 1903, and two papers by Miss Brodie-Hall, Eastbourne Union, and Mr Aveling, Clerk to the Paddington Union, read at the Central Poor Law Conference, February 1904.

of beginning a useful reform. I have some specimen case-papers with me here if any Delegates care to see them.

Quarterly lists have much to answer for, it being constantly assumed that no change can take place in cases placed on this list. Whereas the most unexpected changes may take place in all lives, and quarterly cases need careful revision just as much as others.

It is very important for the Guardians to see each applicant for out-relief if possible, and patiently listen to and question him or her.

Making an applicant sign a written statement of his circumstances has been found an excellent plan in some Unions, experience showing that people will constantly give false information as to their means by word of mouth, but will seldom do so on paper.

Inquiries from employers are very necessary when relief is given to supplement earnings.

Giving relief on loan in certain cases has worked well in some Unions, and it seems a sound system, especially for medical relief, where it may be looked upon as requiring a man to make up for not having joined a doctor's club, by paying his subscriptions after, instead of before, the illness.

The plan of giving medical relief on loan can, like every other method of strict administration, only be begun by degrees, and it can never be carried out in its entirety unless the Medical Officer is paid by case fees as is done in the often quoted Bradfield Union, where all medical relief has been given on loan in the first instance for many years.*

Collection of even such small sums as 3d. or 6d. weekly from relatives is extremely important; not because of the direct saving to the ratepayers, but because of the moral effects.

* See "The Administration of the Poor Law," published in 1892 by Blackett, 34 North Street, Newbury.

An efficient staff of officers is absolutely necessary if there is to be any hope of good administration ; and as regards Relieving Officers especially, I feel sure most Boards of Guardians do not employ enough, and would do their business better—and in the long run cheaper—by increasing their staff and giving really good salaries.

Co-operation with the charitable agencies of a district is indispensable, if overlapping is to be avoided ; the Committees of such charities should be encouraged to communicate freely with Boards of Guardians, and Guardians ought in their turn to let the charities have copies of their rules of administering outdoor relief.

I append a list of rules gathered from those in use in various Unions. I know many Guardians will say—and it certainly sounds plausible—that, as cases vary infinitely, they cannot be classed by rule, but must be judged “on their merits.” But judgment will still be required in order to apply the rules, and although errors must occasionally creep in under any system, I venture to think that there is more risk of making a mistake when cases are judged “on their merits”—meaning, often, merely some knowledge of the applicant by an individual Guardian—than there is fear of hardship and injustice from carrying out rules. One argument in favour of fixed rules seems to me very strong. Their application is uniform and the poor know exactly when they must rely on themselves.

I know many will take exception to the rules relating to widows ; a class for whom our sympathies are very great. I yield to no one in sympathy for these poor women ; but experience leads me to think that the usual so-called merciful system of giving a small weekly sum per child is in reality cruel and sad in its outcome. How can a child be brought up on the usual 1s., 1s. 6d., or even 2s. a week ? Why ! you give 4s. 6d. a week and a quarterly allowance for clothing to

a woman who takes a "boarded-out" child, and yet expect a mother to bring her own children up on 1s. 6d. a week each, and the aid of uncertain charity. These children are simply *dragged* up. How can it be otherwise? The mother cannot leave them to go out to work if they are young, and it is seldom indeed that she is able to earn much at home. Really *adequate* outdoor relief in these cases would mount up to such a large figure as to be very inexpedient, and probably the best plan is to take several of the children out of the care of the mother, giving her access to them occasionally, and leave her to keep herself and one or two children according to her means and their age.*

There is another class which excites all our sympathy : aged respectable people. Till lately, old people who applied for relief had had no opportunity during their youth of joining clubs, or otherwise providing for infirmity and increasing years. Now, however, that is not so. Savings banks, friendly societies, and doctors' clubs date back more than fifty years, and it is possible to argue that everyone ought to try and make some provision for the inevitable day when strength will fail. But I do not intend to go into that now ; the views of the two schools, those who advocate old age pensions—a form of outdoor relief—and those who do not, are well known. I will only observe that at present the trend of public opinion and of recent legislation appears to be decidedly in favour of exceptional treatment for this class, and I suppose many if not most Boards of Guardians have in some way given effect to Mr Chaplin's circular of 1900.

In our Union we have a Class A for "aged and deserving poor," adopted in January 1901. On this list are placed such persons over sixty-five years of age as in

* See account of how this system worked in Bradfield for many years, as set forth in a pamphlet called "From Pauperism to Manliness," published in 1891. The whole subject is exhaustively treated in Chap. XI. of Sir W. Chance's "The Better Administration of the Poor Law."

the opinion of the Board have "habitually led decent and deserving lives." These receive, if living alone and earning nothing, 4s. 6d. weekly; if earning a little, 4s.; old married couples living together and not with relatives have 7s. if still earning a little; and 8s. when past all work.

These weekly allowances must be looked upon as practically old age pensions paid out of the rates; and the system is attended by all the dangers of outdoor relief: still in these cases outdoor relief finds its highest justification. Moreover, aged people are more easily kept under observation than others, and if history sheets have been in use their past records should be easily known.

It occurred to me when I read the chapter on "Old Age Homes" in a little book called "The Danish Poor Relief System" by Miss Edith Sellars, that some plan such as she mentions there of having a sort of Poor Law almshouse for the aged and deserving class might possess the virtues, without the hardships of the "Workhouse test," and could possibly be adopted with advantage in England, if our extravagant methods of building, and the many regulations as to site, sanitation, ventilation, &c., did not make such a plan unduly expensive.

Nothing will tempt me on to the subject of "The Unemployed," but apart from the present special meaning of the word, there is a class more or less always with us, of respectable, able-bodied men temporarily unable to obtain work, where genuine hardship may occur if the House is offered. Nothing could be worse than any relaxation of the Workhouse test for able-bodied people; but in these cases, if the home is broken up, a man's chance of obtaining work and starting afresh is much lowered, and I think it would be well if Boards of Guardians more often adopted the plan pursued by the Whitechapel Board in 1887. They obtained from the Local Government Board a modified Workhouse

test order. This allowed them to take the man into the house, and meanwhile give outdoor relief to his wife and family ; after a short time the man was also given outdoor relief for a definite short period to enable him to look for work.

We have discussed the two heads into which the subject of outdoor relief naturally divides itself, the theoretical and the practical, and when all is said and done, we come back to the matter of personal equation, here as everywhere "the power behind the throne."

It is like love, it laughs at locksmiths, the reddest of tape and biggest of official seals are powerless to bind it. When, if ever, the administration of our Poor Law approaches perfection, and when it is so regulated as to entail neither hardship to the poor nor injustice to the ratepayer, it will be through the instrumentality of Boards of Guardians, or of the bodies that succeed them, who give of their best, mentally and physically, to work which is not, I think, held in sufficient esteem by the public.

Perhaps I am inclined to magnify the office of a Guardian unduly. It certainly seems to me one of the most important of the offices held by the "great unpaid," it is in many ways difficult to fill, and, moreover, it is unpleasant and depressing.

Its importance will not be denied by those who realise how great an influence our treatment of the poor has on the whole national life and its difficulties must weigh on every Guardian. First, there is the double difficulty of forming a sound opinion as to policy, and carrying it out consistently ; and then, with regard to outdoor relief especially, this difficulty is increased by our very virtues appearing to be arrayed against us—humanity, fellow feeling, compassion.

It is, and it ought to be, unpleasant to sit in a warm room, comfortably clad, and refuse small sums—on principle—to a fellow creature in rags and misery, just as it is, and must be, hard to deny to tenderly loved

children things we can easily give, and for which they long and cry, because we know they are bad for them. It is a great strain, too, to keep the mind always at a high level and hold fast to the golden thread of principle; and then there are other difficulties alas! from outside—political considerations sometimes, and the desire for popularity.

And as to the depressing nature of the task! There are bright spots, it is true. Power of improving our Workhouses; hope of giving a good prospect in life to the children under our care; bread-winners tided over an illness; unmarried mothers helped to a fresh start. But, in the main, what a sad routine. Every Board day there files before us a sordid procession of weary, half-starved, broken, sometimes hopeless, lives, and through it all the only true comfort we can lay to our souls is that in time, if we labour wisely, the stream may lessen.

Yet it is a noble office, and a noble name—Guardian of the Poor. It is often said that we are guardians of the ratepayers too, but that is not so. Guardians of the Poor, so that none shall starve, Guardians, too, in a higher sense, so that none shall lose self-respect and all that makes a man—but stewards only of the ratepayers, who are, or should be, their own guardians.

You may ask, What has all this to do with outdoor relief? This: outdoor relief is open to abuse in every direction; the very fact that it can be obtained is such a temptation to the poor that it is difficult to blame them severely for yielding to it at times, and asking for help not really needed; and according as we, their Guardians, encourage or discourage their yielding to temptation, so do we write our impress on the national character, and weaken or strengthen the finest asset any nation can possess—the independence of its individual citizens.

I read years ago, in a very witty essay by Charles

Dickens called "The Begging-Letter Writer,"* words that are often with me. After giving many amusing examples of that particular kind of fraud, and pointing out in a humorous way how he himself was led to the conclusion that help given in these cases only magnified the evil, and was besides nothing but a sop to his own laziness, he ends: "Let us give all we can, let us give more and more. Let us do all we can, let us do more than ever. But let us give and do with a high purpose—not to endow the scum of the earth, to its own greater corruption, with the offals of our duty."

Now, applicants for outdoor relief would rightly be offended at being classed as the scum of the earth, along with the begging letter-writer. That is, of course, not my meaning. It is our pleasure and our privilege to help those among them who can be helped to help themselves, and we should spare no pains in doing it; but whenever we give without sufficient inquiry, or through laziness, or simply because it makes us miserable to refuse, then I think we are endowing those to whom we ought to give richly of our best—our brothers and sisters in want—with the "offals of our duty."

APPENDIX

RULES CONCERNING OUTDOOR RELIEF ADOPTED AND CARRIED OUT BY VARIOUS UNIONS.

Taken from their Printed Forms.

Outdoor relief shall not be granted to applicants of any of the following classes, except where unable through sickness to be removed to the Workhouse:—

- a. Single able-bodied men and single able-bodied women.
- b. Able-bodied widows without children, or having one child to support.
- c. Married women (with or without families), whose husbands are enduring a term of imprisonment.

* "American Notes, Reprinted Pieces."

d. Married women (with or without families), deserted by their husbands.

e. Married women (with or without families), whose husbands have been called up for training in the Militia.

f. Persons residing with relatives liable by law to support the applicant, where the united income of the family is sufficient for the support of all its members.

Able-bodied paupers relieved in sickness shall receive relief in kind only.

The head of each family in receipt of outdoor relief shall render to the Relieving Officer a written statement of the earnings of the family in each week, and the Relieving Officers are ordered to suspend payment for the relief when such statement is not forthcoming.

No person in receipt of permanent relief shall be permitted to work for wages.

Outdoor relief shall not be granted unless the Relieving Officer has since the application visited the house of the applicant. Cases which he has not had time to visit should be relieved in kind or by an order for the House.

Outdoor relief is to be granted for a fixed period only, which shall in no case exceed three weeks.

No out-relief shall be given to any person who does not apply personally to the Relieving Officer, if able to do so.

These are all Unions where pauperism is very small.

Out-relief to able-bodied married men on account of temporary illness of themselves, their wives, or families, if given at all, must be on loan.

Out-relief, if given at all to single able-bodied men or women temporarily disabled, must be given on loan.

Out-relief shall not be given to single women with illegitimate children.

Out-relief shall not be given to non-resident or non-settled poor.

Where relief is allowed to a parent by the admission of a child or children to the Workhouse, such relief shall not be granted for more than six months, after which the Relieving Officer shall visit the home and bring up the case for consideration, as though it were a case for outdoor relief.

All medical orders and extra medical fees shall be given on loan.

The Relieving Officer shall be required to make at least fortnightly visits to the houses of all persons receiving outdoor relief on account of temporary sickness of able-bodied widows receiving relief, and of able-bodied men in the Labour Yard; and to visit the old and infirm cases at least once a quarter.

The Relieving Officer shall himself take the relief to such of the outdoor poor who are unable to attend to receive it, and should check, as much as possible, the passing of relief through the hands of children or strangers.

Non-resident relief to be discontinued except under special circumstances.

Out-relief to be granted only to persons who can satisfy the Guardians that their destitution has not been caused by their own imprudence and intemperance.

Outdoor relief shall not be granted on account of sickness of the applicant for a longer period than two weeks, unless such sickness shall be certified by the Medical Officer as likely to be of longer duration.

Outdoor relief shall not be given for a longer period than two weeks unless the recipient is resident with some person competent and willing to take charge of him or her.

At the end of some of these lists of rules come recommendations and remarks, such as :—

"The provision with respect to the compulsory maintenance of paupers by relatives legally reliable should be more generally acted on."

"Midwifery orders and relief of all kinds should be more frequently given on loan."

"No person has a right to relief from the rates except in case of actual destitution."

"The plea of poverty alone shall not be considered sufficient."

It will be seen that all these rules would not be necessary in the same Union, some being indeed contradictory to the others.

Mr ALLAN DEARDEN (Ecclesall Bierlow) then read the following paper—

OUTDOOR RELIEF.

By MR ALLAN DEARDEN,

Superintendent of Outdoor Relief and Union Collector, Ecclesall Bierlow Union.

THE Committee of the North Midland District Poor Law Conference having asked me to read a paper upon "Outdoor Relief," I have now the honour to submit same to your kind consideration.

As the delegates will be aware, from 1597 to 1834 the Poor Law was administered by the Overseers and churchwardens. The laws were then so lax that one half of England was watching the other half work for them, and matters reached such a climax that the

Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 became law, the Guardians taking the place of the Overseers and churchwardens, and the relieving officer supplying the place of Mr Bumble, the beadle. These laws at first were administered in a most drastic manner, but time gradually brought gentler and more humane thoughts into existence.

Relieving Officers.—A relieving officer should be a well-trained, capable man, thoroughly conversant with the various statutes and orders of the Local Government Board relating to the administration of outdoor relief, and should have a knowledge of criminal and common law, for an officer is often consulted on cases quite outside his own particular work as a relieving officer. He should be intelligent, painstaking, kind, and firm, even with the most obstreperous, a willing worker, for his hours and duties are at times many and various.

The first class on the relief list are the able-bodied, namely, the temporarily sick and the out-of-works.

Sick persons are those who have made no provision for a time of trouble or necessity. Their first step is to apply for a medical order, and before this is granted (unless it is a case of urgency) a thorough investigation by the relieving officer should be made, and should he find that the means of the applicant are *nil*, and the home surroundings satisfactory, an order should then be given for a limited period. If he thinks the case will eventually require relief, the person in question should be advised to make an application, for if the officer knows for a fact that their goods and chattels are gradually being pawned, or that debts are being incurred with the landlord or shopkeeper, a great portion of the relief granted will be to stall off the bailiffs.

In the first case, adequate relief should be given,

for the sooner the recipient is restored to health, the better it is for the Guardians, his wife, and little ones.

The second case is that of the person who has made no provision for a "rainy day," and these should have somewhat different treatment. The Workhouse hospital test is the best to apply, granting outdoor relief for the wife and children. The relieving officer should always press the applicant to join a sick club, as it is a duty they owe to their wives and children, and the cost is *nil*, amounting to a deprivation of a gill of beer a day, or an ounce of tobacco a week.

The out-of-works consist of the *bonâ fide* out of work, the never-want-work, and the man who will work if it is obtained for him.

Under the Prohibitory Order the man is to become wholly chargeable in the Workhouse, and employment to be found for him in the Workhouse test yard. Under the Outdoor Relief Regulation Order, a man can be given outdoor relief, half of which is to be given in money and half in kind, and he is to be found work in the test yard. But what work can he do? Oakum picking is condemned, and stone breaking is said to be degrading. What then is left but wood chopping, corn grinding, or land cultivation? In town Unions land cultivation is impossible, therefore, then, there is only wood chopping and corn grinding. Wood chopping can be worked without loss if the Guardians purchase timber at 16s. to 18s. per ton, pay the single man out of work 3d. per cwt. (half in money and half in kind), a married man 4d., a married man with one child 5d., and so on up to a fixed maximum. The Guardians can easily sell that wood from 30s. to 36s. per ton. Corn grinding can be worked in the same way.

I regret that at times one comes across men who can earn very little, springing from the class such as painters, clerks, &c., whose hands are naturally not accustomed to this work; but the Superintendent of

the test yard has the trade of each person given to him, and he can report to the relieving officer as to the man's ability, and if needed he could grant extra relief in kind.

The "never-want-work" is one who should be kept in a penal colony or Bastile. This class, as a rule, are either in the Workhouse or prison, caring little which it is. If he is sent to the test yard, he is probably either insubordinate, or manages to do some slight injury to himself so that he can get into the Workhouse, or he comes to the office in a dirty condition, and there are very few "tricks of the trade" that he does not know, in order to raise the presumption that he is suffering from sickness. Again, he will come to the residence of the relieving officer about bedtime, stating that he has nowhere to go, and has had nothing to eat for several days. The present style of Workhouse is no good for this class, and a drastic remedy is certainly required. They had better ways in the olden times. Taking the Act of Elizabeth, c. 5, passed in 1576, which states that "Any person refusing work, or begging, or living idly, or taking such work, spoiling or embezzling it in such wise, that after monition given by the minister or churchwardens, and if the collectors or governors think such person not meet to have any work delivered to him, was to be taken in convenient apparel meet for such a body to wear, to the house of correction, there to be straitly kept as well as in diet as in work, and punished from time to time"; but the softening process started about 1700. John Cavey says (see "British Encyclopædia"), "Anything that may move compassion is made a livelihood, a sore leg or arm, or want thereof, a pretended one." The tricks and devices I have met with to be used by them have often caused me to think that these parts, if better used, might be made useful to the nation. Our laws to set the poor at work are short and defective, tending rather to maintain

them and to give them a better way of living. It is true these laws designed well, but would appear to generalise too much, thus falling short in attaining the desired end, and thereby rendering the poor more bold, when they know the parish officers have either to provide work or give assistance.

The man who will work if it is found for him is one who is soon disheartened. He will go to several employers, and if they cannot find him work, will not try again, but drift back to the parish. He is a "come-day-go-day-God-send-Sunday" sort of fellow, for when found employment, seldom tries to improve himself, or make provision for a day when he may be in straitened circumstances. "*Nil desperandum*" is not his motto.

The next class on the relief lists are the young widows, single women, wives of soldiers, sailors, prisoners, and non-resident males.

The young widows can be divided into three classes, namely—(1) The thrifty, hard-working, respectable ones, who strive in every way to bring up their families honourably. The children are cleanly, obedient, regular attenders at school, and it is always a pleasure to assist them in any little difficulties they may have. (2) The next class are the extravagant, excitable, irritable ones, who spend all their insurance or club-money upon an elaborate funeral, and then apply to the Guardians a few days afterwards for relief, and resent anything said to them. Their children are unruly or spoiled, or chastised according to their mother's humour. They attend school irregularly, and the relieving officer always feels pleased when the case comes to a satisfactory conclusion. The third class, and the final one, are the gossips and the slattern, who generally turn out unsatisfactory cases. I would recommend that in the case of new applicants, when the bereavement has been recent, and the widow is for a time on her good behaviour, that the relieving officer should endeavour

to obtain her consent to her children being placed in some refuge or charity school, leaving her free to obtain some employment.

Officers should know all cases, be most particular to inquire into sleeping accommodation and proper division of the sexes, and to report to the sanitary authority if they find overcrowding or other irregularities.

Single women, with or without children, are better in the Workhouse. If they are of good behaviour and temporarily out of employment, the Matron often knows of some householders who have applied for servants, and arrangements can soon be made for their removal. If on the other hand they are lazy, immoral, or vicious, it is far better, and a wiser policy, to have them under care and control. In the case of the vicious, immoral, and slightly defective, legislation is urgently needed to grant power to detain them in the same way as the magistrates have to detain lunatics in the Workhouse. Cases are constantly found, partly cured of some loathsome or contagious disease, taking their discharge to their homes or lodgings, using the same beds, conveniences, and feeding utensils as others. This should not be. How often have Guardians known weak-minded girls leaving the Workhouse, disappearing for a few months, returning pregnant, and hardly knowing the putative father of the child about to be born.

The wives of soldiers and sailors are seldom chargeable, for if the husband enlists, a warrant for desertion can be issued, and the commanding officer can himself discharge the soldier, and hand him over to the constable, or he may be brought by the military or naval authorities for false attestation.

The wives of non-resident males may be divided into two classes, namely, those whose husbands are in asylums, hospitals, &c. If they are respectable, they should be treated in the same way as the young widows, but the wives of non-resident males whose

husbands have deserted them or otherwise, the Workhouse test should be applied, for there is generally some reason or cause for their absence. The Guardians will know that they can grant outdoor relief to these cases if their children are under the age of nurture, or if their husbands are beyond the seas, but nowadays there are so many ways of sending help, that a relieving officer is unable to watch all points. Two recent cases have come to my knowledge, namely, a young woman with five children applying for relief, stating that her husband had gone abroad, and his address was unknown. Relief was granted, and it was afterwards found out that the husband was remitting weekly sums to the brother-in-law, who was paying same to the wife. In another case, money was forwarded by an employer abroad to his agents here, and we found out that a weekly amount was being paid to the wife. Give them out-relief, and desertion is encouraged! Give Workhouse orders, and it is deterred!

The next on the list are the old and infirm, their wives and children.

These are generally known as the relieving officer's "pet cases." They are certainly the most numerous, and take the least working. Behave kindly and courteously to them, and your efforts will be repaid. They can be of great assistance if the relieving officer is in any difficulty about a case. He should consult those in the immediate neighbourhood, and they will do what they can for him. They are sentinels for relieving officers, and should be treated as such. They consult one in their family troubles, and send to one often on their beds of sickness. My advice to an officer is, Spare a little time with them; do not go into their homes as an officer, but as a friend, a brother, and do a brother's part; inquire into their means, for you know how much a day they can live on (the average at the present time is 3½d. to 4d.,

coals cost from 8d. to 10d. per week, rooms 1s. 6d. to 2s.), and see that they have a little margin over. Private charity does a lot; it clothes them, and finds them a few luxuries. It is a curious anomaly, but well known to those dealing with the poor, that the poor are kinder to their own class than the majority of the well-to-do. If an officer finds an old lady residing by herself, he should try to get one in similar circumstances to live with her. Odd cases are always found which are difficult to manage, and the diseases that they are suffering from often do not improve their tempers. An officer must therefore exercise all the patience at his command. Sometimes it is necessary to take a risk, and remove such to the Hospital in spite of their protestations. It often causes real sorrow amongst many officers when they lose their dear and true old friends.

Orphan and other Children.—These are now to be boarded out, or taken into the Workhouse. An uncle, aunt, brother, or sister, cannot now have outdoor relief for them, but the grandfather or grandmother, or any person liable to maintain them, can, on the ground that they are liable under the maintenance laws.

Lunatics.—The lunacy laws are the most stringent that the relieving officers have to work, and rightly so; but when one found that a King's Counsellor, officials of the Local Government Board, and one of our most learned clerks, give one version of the section of 1890 Act, and the Lunacy Authority another, the work is made difficult. An officer doubts whether he is doing right or wrong. Take the following case:—A lunatic is found, not actually a pauper, but in such circumstances as to require relief. Are two medical certificates and a specially appointed Justice required under section 13, or would section 14 of the Act be sufficient? This is the relieving officer's *pons asinorum*. The next point is, Why should not a

constable or overseer act under section 13, when they have knowledge that a person of unsound mind, not being a pauper or wandering at large, is not under proper care and control? The custom is to pass the case on to the relieving officer, when the constable or overseer in question are as equally liable to a penalty for not attending to the case within the three days, as the relieving officer.

The final point is, Why do Magistrates order a lunatic to be brought before them at the Police Court for examination? Such a procedure either excites or depresses the patient, and a fair examination by a Magistrate and a medical practitioner cannot take place at Court, not taking into consideration the effect of the crowds of curiosity-mongers upon the lunatic in question. The practice is, I believe, condemned by the Lunacy Authorities and also by Medical Superintendents.

Epileptics.—I think most delegates here will agree that it seems neither right nor human that this class of person should be confined in an asylum. They are certainly *non compos mentis* at times, and may be homicidal, suicidal, or dangerous in other ways, but when the fits are quiescent the majority are as sane as other persons.

Case Papers, &c.—In many Unions the case paper system has now come into vogue, and the officer who is working it naturally likes the system, for it cannot help but be of material assistance to him in his work, and those who have worked with it unanimously agree that it is far in advance of the Application and Report Book, for it gives the Guardians great assistance in not only providing a complete history of individual cases, but showing at a glance the decision of the various relief committees from time to time in consecutive order. It is of assistance at the Police Court, for it shows the written orders of the Guardians, as well as those who are liable to maintain, and the

earnings of each member of the family. It assists the settlement officer, for it gives the date and place of birth of the applicant, and all particulars relating to such applicants. It is also of assistance to the overseers in making out parliamentary lists, as it states whether the applicant is a householder or lodger. But the main advantage, which I feel I cannot press home too much, is that if an officer resign or die, the newly appointed official can, if sufficiently energetic, start where the old officer leaves off, and not have to spend years of time and experience to find out the ins-and-outs of every case.

The only objection that can be made against the system is the difficulty of the audit, but this can be easily overcome if the Local Government Board should authorise the Relief Order Book to be substituted at audit for the Application and Report Book, and if the information contained in the case papers should be used as a check upon the legality of the relief.

It would also reduce the cost of printing and storage. The case papers in vogue in the Ecclesall Union differ somewhat from those in other Unions, for it has been feared that the cost of storage would be a very serious item. Therefore, to reduce the space, the history of the family is put upon the thick backing-sheet, and one paper is used for the relatives liable to maintain, instead of each member of the family having one sheet to himself.

The books in use are, of course, the Application and Report Book, the Stoppage Book, and Five Registers, viz.—1. Admissions and Discharges (Workhouse); 2. Admissions and Discharges (Asylums); 3. Other Institutions; 4. Revision Register; and 5. Case Paper Register.

To fill up a case paper averages about twenty minutes. On being filled up, the relieving officer copies the application into the Application and Report Book, and on the morning of the day previous to the

meeting of the Committee, the Superintendent goes over every case paper, and stamps in the words—

APPROVED. Weeks. Date.....1906.
--

At the meeting of the Committee, same are taken before them, together with the Application and Report Book, and as the cases are disposed of, one Guardian enters the order on the case paper, and one in the Application and Report Book. The chairman, after the cases have been heard, signs the Relief Order Book, which is then countersigned by the clerk.

At the termination of the meeting, each relieving officer hands the case papers over to the Superintendent, and he, with the assistance of a case paper clerk, sorts them into three divisions, namely (1) Old cases taken from the cabinet; (2) New cases for outdoor relief; and (3) Admissions to the Workhouse, asylums, &c.

He now takes the Revision Register, and enters the name and number of each case forward to the week when same will have to be revised by the Guardians. He then replaces the old cases in the cabinet which have been extracted during the week, taking the Cabinet Register to see if all have been returned, and if so, to initial each case in that register. He afterwards takes all the Admission and Discharge Registers, and enters the index number in a column ruled for that purpose. All new cases are indexed, and the index number is stamped on each case paper, and then placed in the Filing Cabinet.

To make the system a success, it should be started *de novo* in every case, for it is surprising the different statements made when the case paper is taken to what were given on the first application.

Out of 3,632 case papers taken in 1905, twenty-four old settlement cases were discovered—namely, twenty-eight inmates, and three lunatics—and these have been removed to other Unions, showing a yearly saving of £681. 12s. ; also a thorough investigation of outdoor relief shows a reduction of £255. 19s. 9d., and an increase of £222. 7s. 8d. on the amount of money collected towards the maintenance of those chargeable.

The salaries, cabinet, and stock, cost £258. 10s. 6d., showing a net saving on the year of £907. 8s. 11d. I may add that the present year, so far, appears to show reasonable hopes of effecting a similar saving.

Children and School Cards.—It surprises me that no Board of Guardians has moved in this matter. Guardians have decided that the indoor children shall not come into contact with adult paupers. Village, Cottage, and Scattered Homes have been built, in order that the taint of pauperism shall not reach the children formerly in the Workhouse, yet the children of the outdoor poor have still to take their school cards to the teacher each week, in order to have their attendances marked, the result being that every child in that school knows whether the parents of his fellow-scholars are receiving relief. In many schools, attendance cards are not now being used.

Guardians and their Officers.—How often have complaints been heard by officers of the treatment meted out to them by some Guardians! Relieving officers have been known to bring a case forward which has received thorough investigation, but they find that private influence has been brought to bear on it, and their advice, if asked, is not heeded, but often ignored. This tends to break the spirit of a good relieving officer. The suggestions of Sir William Chance are worth quoting, namely :—

1. To have an adequate staff of relieving officers.
2. To insist on the fullest information about every case.

3. Having got a good officer, back him up through thick and thin.
4. To make the relief adequate to meet the necessities of the case.
5. To insist on frequent and regular visiting of any case.
6. To work in close co-operation with charitable agencies.

Relieving officers cannot be loved by the multitude. They have to expose the tricks, idiosyncracies, and sins of some of the applicants. It was said by a well-known Local Government Inspector, that "Unless an officer was unpopular it was doubtful if he was ever doing his duty."

Now I must conclude. The time does not allow me to continue, and I cannot deal, as I should like, with the Underfed School Children's Order, the Laws of Maintenance, the Infant Life Protection Act, the Cruelty to Children Act, and the Unemployed Act, but must leave same for some abler pen than mine.

Index No......

ECCLESALL BIERLOW UNION.

History Sheet No......

No. of Relief District.....

Name of Applicant..... *Age*.....

Address..... (*Lodger or Householder*)

If Lodger, who with.....

Date of Application.	Nature and Cause of Application and how dealt with.	Order of the Guardians.	Initial of Guardians.

REPORT OF SUPERINTENDENT OF OUTDOOR RELIEF.

(*Where applicable to case.*)

SETTLEMENT SHEET.

No......

History Sheet No......

.....

.....

.....

RELATIVES LIABLE TO MAINTAIN.

Name.	Age.	Relationship.	Residence.	Trade and where employed.	Earnings.	If Wife works and what does she earn?	Names and Ages of Children.	Earnings of Children.	Rent.	If in Sick Club.	Does he maintain any other Relative?	Amount ordered by Guardians.
												
												
												
												
												
												

.....
Relieving Officer.

DISCUSSION.

Mr J. L. P. BARBER (Burton-on-Trent) said he had been very much interested in Mrs Ramsay's paper. He believed she said that outdoor relief was dangerous. Well, some old Guardians might agree with that in a measure, but at the same time he did feel that in giving out-relief they were doing that which was really best for the people themselves. If they administered out-relief judiciously they would save immense expense by reducing the huge establishments they had to-day in which the poor were crowded together. He believed that every Guardian present was desirous of giving proper relief to the deserving poor. (Hear, hear.) Whilst they wished to put down all kinds of imposition, they must recognise the fact that there were hundreds of people in the country to-day who were in the position they were through no fault of their own, but who had outlived their savings. To force these poor people to break up their little homes and send them into the Workhouse would be a most cruel thing to do. (Hear, hear.) There might be danger in giving outdoor relief, but there was need that they should help the deserving poor as far as possible. He was glad to hear Mrs Ramsay advocate that deserving couples should have 8s. per week. (Hear, hear.) He believed the system of case-papers was most useful, but this was a work which should not be cast as an extra burden upon their officials. (Hear, hear.) It had been said in one of the papers that it was a dangerous thing to judge a case on its merits. Well, he had always advocated that cases should be judged upon their merits. (Hear, hear.) They could not stereotype relief. (Hear, hear.) They were obliged to take each case upon its merits. (Hear, hear.) He was told that in Nottingham Guardians did not deal with their own cases. That seemed very strange to him, because a Guardian was elected because of his knowledge of the poor, and if he could not be trusted not to indulge in favouritism, he was not to be trusted at all. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. PARSONS (Hayfield) said he would like a recommendation from that Conference that the well-deserving and infirm poor should have an increase of pay. In his Union they gave 3s. 6d., and he wanted his colleagues to give those over sixty years of age 4s. He was defeated on the ground that every case ought to be taken on its merits, but unfortunately they had never had a single case that had received the amount of money he recommended. In his mind this was most disgraceful. (Laughter.)

Mr J. POTTER (Derby) said some people rejoiced when pauperism went down, but did they ever seriously question the evils which lay behind it and the suffering entailed by the people who had been refused relief. Guardians knew, when children were kept in cottages, how much it cost to clothe and feed them. Without rent, rates, coal, gas, &c., it amounted to over 3s. per head—namely, 3s. 8½d. How could they expect, then, a woman who had to pay rent, &c., to

keep her children on 1s. 6d. or 2s. each per week. (Hear, hear.) Why could not they say to a respectable woman left with five or six children, "We are going to be your friend. You must not go out to work, but remain at home and look after your children, and we will find you what is necessary?" It would be much better than placing these children under a stranger who was not their natural guardian. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. OVERTON (Lincoln) said that in his own Union the cost of out-relief would not be anything like what it is were it not for politics and religion. (Laughter.) He went on to say that the respectable poor should be treated like respectable people. At the same time, Guardians ought to offer the "House" to those who had not attempted to provide for themselves. (Hear, hear.) With respect to allowance made to widows with children he maintained that in the past Guardians had neglected their duty to them. (Hear, hear.)

Mr J. BLOSSOM (Ecclesall) said that in his Union, they saved £907 in one year by appointing a clerk specially to look after the case-paper cases. (Hear, hear.) If that Conference did nothing but send delegates back home determined to inaugurate so beneficial a system, then they would come to the conclusion that Poor Law Conferences did accomplish some real good. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs SIMPSON (Derby) said there were many Guardians who knew nothing about the scale of relief, but were quite content to leave others to do their share of work as well as their own. (Hear, hear.) There was one point in Mrs Ramsay's paper she could not agree with, and that was in respect to the separation of children from their mothers, if they were widows. Of course they took children away from their mothers in Derby if those mothers were unworthy, but to take a child away from its natural guardian, when the mother was a good mother, was a most cruel thing to do. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. C. HARRISON (Basford) said it would be a great shame if Guardians pressed deserving old people into the Workhouse. (Hear, hear.) What Guardians wanted to do was to discriminate between the deserving and undeserving poor. (Hear, hear.)

Mr R. FINNEY (Shardlow) said that although Guardians might have a scale of relief for able-bodied persons, it was utterly impossible to carry it out in every case. (Hear, hear.) Guardians should deal fairly, considerately, and kindly in every case that came before them. Of course there must naturally be a difference between country Unions and town Unions, and this was a point that was very often lost sight of. He was quite sure that in country Unions the Guardians knew perfectly well all about the poor, and if they would only exercise their discretion there would be less complaints than there were. (Hear, hear.)

Mr F. S. HERNE (Leicester) said that his Board had a farm of fifty acres and another estate of over twenty acres, and they sent their men upon the land with the most excellent results. (Hear, hear.)

Only the previous day the Guardians sold 1,100 lbs. of tomatoes at 3½d. per lb., all grown by men out of the Workhouse.

Mr D. G. HARRIS (Sleaford) said that hitherto he had been opposed to the case-paper system, but now he should return home and advocate it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr STORER (Wirksworth) pointed out that out-relief was not always the most costly method of relief, for it saved them from having to build larger Workhouses. (Hear, hear.) He was a firm believer in the thorough investigation of relief cases. (Hear, hear.)

The Hon. GERALD WALSH (Poor Law Inspector) said he was delighted to find that objection to the case-paper system was rapidly dying out. (Hear, hear.) He thought it was bad for Guardians, in relief cases, to put themselves in the position of special pleaders. (Hear, hear.) If they knew the cases, it was not their province to go further, and he was perfectly certain that if they did not go further their relief would be just, and the ratepayers would be satisfied. (Hear, hear.) They must not forget that the fund the relief came from was taken from the ratepayers compulsorily, and therefore they should be all the more careful how they administered it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. P. BENNETT (Shardlow) said that in his opinion Guardians should investigate cases for themselves, and not leave them entirely to the relieving officers. (Hear, hear.)

Hon. F. STRUTT spoke in favour of a uniform system of relief, and said he had long thought that non-resident relief could not be given. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs RAMSAY, replying to the discussion, asked whether they could not get some general principle which they might all apply, not for the hardship of the poor, but to do the best they could by helping them to help themselves. (Hear, hear.)

Mr ALLAN DEARDEN also briefly replied, and the discussion germinated.

THE ANNUAL DINNER.

The annual dinner took place in the evening at the Royal Hotel, Councillor G. Innes presiding. Most of the delegates who attended the Conference in the afternoon were present, in addition to Mr H. H. Raphael, M.P.; the Hon. F. Strutt (Hon. Secretary of the Conference); Sir E. T. Ann (Mayor of Derby); Councillor H. Arnold Bemrose, J.P.; the Rev. H. R. Rolfe; the Rev. Canon Browne; Mr N. Twigge (Clerk to the Derby Board of Guardians); Mr Grantham (Assistant Clerk); Councillor Cholerton, Mr W. P. Edwards, Councillor Blount, Mr Bushell, and a number of ladies. After the customary loyal toasts, Mr J. L. P. BARBER, J.P., proposed "The Houses of Parliament." In doing so he said there were no people who took more interest in public matters and watched more carefully the work of Members of Parliament than the members of Boards of Guardians. (Hear, hear.) Their Members of Parliament

were not just now able to do much for them, because of the Commission which was sitting, and for a time they would have to wait until that inquiry was ended, and their report was made before they had any legislation with respect to the Poor Law. He did hope, however, that when the Report was presented, if there was any movement in the direction of abolishing Boards of Guardians as a body, those Members of Parliament with whom they came in contact would oppose any such idea. (Hear, hear.) It would be a very sad day for the poor and this country when Boards of Guardians were done away with, and their duties merged in some other body. (Hear, hear.)

Mr H. H. RAPHAEL, M.P., who was received with applause, responded. He said that although party feeling might run high in the House of Commons, when it came to a question of the welfare and well-being of the poor, party politics became extinct, and every member of the House looked to the general welfare of those who were unable to help themselves. (Hear, hear.) He thought he could say for the House of Commons that the great questions put before them would be dealt with on their merits. (Hear, hear.) He did not say they would come to a right conclusion, but they would do everything they possibly could to make the solution of these questions benefit the poor people concerned without regard to party interest. (Hear, hear.) He trusted that whatever scheme was introduced there would be no abolition of Boards of Guardians as they existed at the present time. (Hear, hear.) Poor Law Guardians had done their work well in the past, and were experts in that particular direction. He did not think it would be wise to turn over their duties to a body of men who could not give the same time, care, and attention to the sacred interests which had been committed to their charge as could the Guardians of the present time. (Hear, hear.) Then he objected to such a proposal, because he was not in favour of the system of centralisation. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that what suggestions were made by the Commission now sitting, they would be such as would tend to the benefit and welfare of the poorer classes of the nation. (Hear, hear.)

Mr R. FINNEY, J.P., next proposed "Derby Local Authorities." In doing so, he congratulated the Mayor of Derby upon receiving the honour of knighthood, which, he said, was well deserved, and had given the greatest satisfaction to all his friends. (Hear, hear.) Passing on, he referred to the great works which the Corporation of Derby had undertaken, and speaking of Local Guardians, said he believed they aimed not only at being Guardians of the Poor, but also Guardians of poor ratepayers. (Hear, hear.)

The MAYOR OF DERBY, in responding, said he felt that every town ought to have one local authority for everything. His Worship also expressed a hope that ere long the country would see a system of old age pensions in practice. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. CANON BROWNE also replied, and remarked that none but men

who were in full sympathy with the work should enter upon the duties of a Poor Law Guardian. (Hear, hear.) In his opinion, it would be the greatest possible mistake if all local affairs were administered by one central body. (Hear, hear.) Speaking of the work of a Poor Law Guardian, he said it was not so highly appreciated as it ought to be, and if people knew how much time they put in, people would be a little more forbearing and a little less critical. (Hear, hear.) The Derby Guardians were fortunate in the possession of an admirable chairman and a most able clerk, and were thus able to transact their business in a most satisfactory manner. (Hear, hear.)

Councillor BEMROSE also acknowledged the toast on behalf of the Derby Education Committee. He said it was not the wish of Education Committees to confine the best education to those who could afford it. It was their desire that every child who had brains should be able to climb the ladder by means of scholarships, until the highest position was attained. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. P. EDWARDS proposed "The North Midland Conference." In doing so he referred to the public work of the Hon. F. Strutt, the Hon. Secretary of the Conference, who, he said, took a very deep interest in Poor Law work. He referred to the difficult nature of the work of a Poor Law Guardian, but said that despite the difficulty, the duties were discharged in the best possible manner.

Hon. F. STRUTT, who responded, said that more than twice the number of Unions were represented upon the present occasion than were represented at the last Conference held in Derby twelve or thirteen years ago. (Hear, hear.) Referring to the question of imbeciles and epileptics, he referred to the great need of more appropriate accommodation for them. It had been found that in the county of Derby alone there were 400 idiots, imbeciles, and epileptics between five and eighteen years of age, who ought to be educated in some proper place. These poor things had to be either kept in the Workhouse or sent to an asylum. He hoped that ere long this state of things would be remedied by the provision of a proper institution for the education of those unfortunate members of society. (Hear, hear.)

Mr J. H. WALKER proposed "The Lady Delegates," which was acknowledged by Mrs E. A. SIMPSON, and the toast of "The Chairman" was proposed by Councillor BLOUNT, and suitably acknowledged.

During the evening a capital musical programme was rendered.

THURSDAY, 11th OCTOBER.

Upon the resumption of the Conference, a discussion took place as to the method of distributing copies of the papers to be read, and it was decided that in the future they should be sent to the various Clerks to Guardians as usual, with an ample supply of circulars, and that papers be not only sent to delegates but members of the Committee also.

Mr WATERHOUSE (Glossop) proposed that His Grace the Duke of Devonshire be re-elected President, and this was seconded and carried.

Mr T. Palmer (Ex-Chairman of the Nottingham Union), Mr J. L. P. Barber (Chairman of the Burton-on-Trent Union), and Mrs Pratt (Ashby-de-la Zouch) were elected representatives on the Central Poor Law Conference Committee.

The Hon. SECRETARY said the next question was where the Conference should be held next year. His own feeling was that it should be held somewhere east of Derby. He would prefer Newark, which would be very central, but Newark had never supported the Conference in any way, and in the absence of any encouragement Newark could not be considered.

After some discussion, in the course of which Brigg and Chesterfield were suggested, it was decided to hold the Conference at Ecclesall.

The Hon. SECRETARY said the next business was the election of the Committee for arranging the Conference, and eventually the following were elected :—

Blossom, James, 186 South View Road, Sheffield.

Bown, Joseph, Somercotes, Alfreton.

Carrier, Miss Evelyn, "The Close," St John's Road, Leicester.

Finney, Richard, Hemington, Derby.

Holland, A. F., Leicester.

Jeffs, C., Grimsby.

Pearson, Theo., Esq., J.P., Abercrombie Street, Chesterfield.

Rolfe, Rev. Hy. Rogers, St Michael's Vicarage, Derby.

Simpson, Mrs Ellen A., "Heather Brae," Whittaker Road, Derby.

Smith, James Sleath, Mountsorrel, Loughborough.

Emmerson, George, Kiveton Park.

Barker, C., Ecclesall.

Ward, Thomas, Nottingham.

Hon. F. STRUTT said it would be a great relief to him if the Conference could induce some other gentleman to undertake the duties of Hon. Secretary. The great infirmity of deafness from which he suffered handicapped him very much, but he could assure them that he had done his best, and was quite willing to go on until they could find a suitable gentleman to succeed him.

Mr J. BLOSSOM said he had much pleasure in proposing the re-election of Mr Strutt. (Hear, hear.) For many years Mr Strutt had discharged the duties with the greatest possible ability, and made the most admirable arrangements for the annual Conference. (Hear, hear.) He gave intending readers of papers plenty of time to prepare their matter, and in every way, was the most suitable gentleman for the position. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was seconded.

The PRESIDENT—I am sure that everyone will vote for that. (Hear, hear.)

The motion was carried unanimously.

Hon. F. STRUTT suitably returned thanks for the honour again conferred upon him, and said that he trusted that another year it would not be necessary to call upon Unions for a 10s. subscription, as their expenses were now very small. (Hear, hear.)

Mr THOMAS PALMER (Nottingham) then read the following paper—

THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE'S REPORT.

By MR THOMAS PALMER,

Member of the City of Nottingham Board of Guardians.

IT is due to this Conference and to myself that the responsibility for this paper should be placed on the right shoulders. I had no intention or idea of being a contributor until invited by the Chairman of the Derby Board of Guardians, who informed me that his Board had unanimously resolved to ask me to read a paper on "Out-Relief." I declined, on the ground that the subject I was most interested in at present was the "Vagrancy Report," and was assured that they would gladly accept the change of subject, and after some pressure I consented. Hence this paper. Of course I do not wish to impose upon Mr Rolfe or the Derby Board responsibility for my opinions; they could not reasonably be expected to assume that; I am quite prepared to bear the onus myself, and in the time at my disposal can only hope to touch lightly upon what appear to me the chief and most salient points of the question. It is impossible in a short

paper to deal exhaustively with a report of 123 pages, founded upon evidence occupying 380 closely printed folios, and comprising more than 11,000 questions and answers. I have given a large amount of time to the reading and study of both, but I am not capable of compressing so much matter into so small a compass. Therefore let me disclaim any hope or expectation of throwing a flood of light on this perplexing subject. I can only give *my own views*, and the reasons upon which my conclusions are based. And let me say how highly I value this Report, and with what deep interest I have read the voluminous evidence, not because I agree with all its deductions, or accept its recommendations, but because it presents something like a panoramic view of vagrancy and its treatment from the fifteenth century to our own day, and embodies the latest opinions of experts upon its present volume and extent, and its present and future treatment. I wish that it had lain within the province of the Committee to inquire into the *origin* of the vagrant and his conditions, for it seems to my mind absolutely necessary to understand his "genesis" before we can provide for and accomplish his "exodus." There must be a reason, or reasons, for his existence, which are not within *our* sight, and have not come under the observation of the Committee. Their business, like our own, has been with the concrete and experienced side of the phenomena, rather than with the abstract or basic reasons for its existence. The student of sociology would say, "You cannot reasonably expect any other results from the underlying conditions; there are forces in operation in the very structure of society which must inevitably produce and perpetuate vagrancy; and that is why you have always this endless procession of outcast and wastrel humanity marching down the avenues of time: a problem and a menace to every age. The only way to exterminate it is to take away the conditions which produce it. You reap only what you have

sown. To secure a good harvest you must plough deep and kill the weeds, and sow good seed." The Report throws no light on this part of the subject, and *we* are too busy with its actual phenomena to have time for it : but others are engaged therein. For ages, and until quite recent times, the same thing was true of medical science. Disease existed, manifested itself in various forms, and was treated according to established formulæ ; but no research was made into its origin, and the mortality was frightful. But the modern science of pathology has proved that three-fifths of all disease is preventable ; has infinitely extended the possibility, nay, the certainty of cure ; has enormously lessened the death-rate, and increased the average length of human life. The same thing must, and will be done for the evils and diseases of our social system. This field of research is attracting the best minds of the age, and the time is rapidly coming when the heart and conscience of the nation will be fully aroused, and will insist on the removal of those social conditions which are the cause of the vast amount of poverty and crime that are the disgrace and danger of our times. And that will be the end of vagrancy and reports thereon.

The Committee was appointed on 11th July 1904 to inquire and report with respect to England and Wales as to :—

1. The law applicable to persons of the vagrant class.
2. The administration of the said law.
3. Any amendments which should be made in it or its administration.

This reference is very much wider than an inquiry into the working of the Casual Poor Act, 1882, and the Order founded thereon ; but it has the fatal omission to which I have referred. No inquiry was to be made into the causes which produce vagrancy. It seems to be taken for granted that it is the normal

condition of things, perfectly natural and inevitable; and a number of scenes from ancient history are given to prove that it has been with us from the earliest times. An appropriate motto for the title-page of the Report would be, "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end." I have no hesitation in saying that an inquiry conducted on such lines, so completely ignoring the very first principles of scientific investigation, must be misleading and inconclusive, and any legislation founded thereon is foredoomed to failure. I cannot find in the evidence taken, in the experience of the witnesses, or the recommendations of the Committee, a single ray of hope for a radical cure. If a ship in mid-ocean springs a leak, the pumps are set to work, and every effort made to keep her afloat until the leak can be discovered and stopped. That is the main thing. Stop the influx. They don't waste time and strength in trying different kinds of pumps and leave the leak unsought for. Divers are sent down to locate the damage, and means are used to *keep the water out*. Then the work is not hopeless, and the old pumps can soon get the ship dry. Is it not about time we adopted a similar plan with regard to the constant influx of vagrancy? Consider the subject from this point of view: more than one-fourth of our population are always living in poverty, on the border-line of destitution, unable by all their earnings to maintain physical efficiency: *vide* Sir Charles Booth, B. S. Rowntree, General Booth, J. London, and many others; and are housed in such conditions as no man would think good enough for his horse. Think of the state of things revealed by the *Daily News* Sweated Industries Exhibition; note the fact that in the best of times there are always large numbers of unemployed; that improvements in machinery are constantly displacing human labour; that nowadays a man forty-five or at most fifty years of age is considered past efficiency, and is relegated to

the scrap heap because the instruments and machinery of trade and production are almost entirely monopolised by large capitalists, whose trusts and combines are only concerned to make large dividends for their shareholders ; that the insane and unscrupulous competition of the times tends always to reduce wages ; and who can wonder at the existence of homeless poverty and vagrancy ? The marvel is not that it exists, but that it is not much greater in volume. The life of a fourth of the people is one long struggle against conditions which are depressing, degrading, and demoralising, and their only outlook is dark and hopeless. Yet on page 1 of the Report we read :—

“More than thirty years ago an acute observer complained that for vagrants who will not have households of their own, who have but one object in all their *wicked and perverse lives*, to exist without work at the expense of their industrious neighbours, *we* are taxed to provide board and lodging ;” and expressed his belief that in all the army of tramps “there is no appreciable element of honest poverty or of penniless industry seeking work.”

If that “acute observer” had turned his attention to the opposite extremity of the social scale, he would have discovered the same striking features, viz., a strong disinclination to work, and an equally firm determination to live on the labours of others. The Report says truly :—

“This complaint might be repeated with considerable justice at the present day. The army of vagrants has increased in numbers of late years, and there is reason to fear that it will continue to increase if things are left as they are.”

I share in that fear, and do not find much ground for hope in what follows :—

“Briefly, the object of the scheme which we propose is to place the vagrant more under the control of the police, to help the *bona-fide* wayfarer, and to pro-

vide a means of detaining the habitual vagrant under reformatory influences."

And this object is to be attained by the revolutionary proposal No. 1: "Casual wards to be placed under the control of the police authority." And naturally we ask why? Why? On pp. 32-33, pars. 113-119, we are given the following reasons:—

"It is clear to us that the present system neither repels nor reforms the vagrant.

"It is agreed that the essential condition of success is uniformity of administration, but *the evidence is overwhelming that this object is not attained.* . . .

"The evidence also shows the *practical impossibility* of obtaining uniformity under the present system. . . .

"There is *no means of obtaining uniformity* at present, and if stricter requirements were introduced the difficulty would be increased. To require absolute uniformity from so large a number of Poor Law authorities, varying from each other in almost every possible detail, would involve so much interference by the central authority as to render the scheme impracticable."

And again I ask why? Whence comes this "overwhelming" evidence which proves the "practical impossibility" of securing uniformity? Out of the fifty-six witnesses examined only fourteen were directly connected with the Poor Law, viz., three Local Government Board Inspectors, six Guardians, three Clerks to Guardians, and two Masters of Workhouses; not a single labour master or casual ward officer, and, of course, *not one vagrant*. The very person who might be expected to have a natural interest in the proceedings was conspicuous by his absence, and was not represented by counsel; so we do not get his point of view. I do not dispute the "lack of uniformity," but it is clear from the testimony of the above-named persons that it is due partly to the optional

character of some of the regulations, and still more to laxity on the part of the Guardians. From 1882 to 1885 the figures of pauper vagrancy decreased, because the Order was a new one and properly carried out; but as soon as laxity crept in the figures began to rise, until in 1895 a deputation representing 250 Unions waited upon Mr Shaw-Lefevre, President, Local Government Board, asking for a Royal Commission or Departmental Committee to inquire into the whole subject. This was somewhat curtly refused; they were told the remedy was in the hands of the Guardians themselves, who ought to enforce the Order, and they would find that vagrancy would decrease. A circular letter sent to the Guardians in 1896 said it had been proved again and again that "strict administration immediately produces a marked reduction in the numbers of applicants," and adding, "if it should hereafter be found that the existing law when duly enforced by Boards of Guardians generally throughout the country is insufficient to meet the evil, the Board will be quite ready to consider what further action should be taken."

I do not dispute the charge of "lack of uniformity in administration"; the past and present difficulties have arisen from that source, rather than from inherent defects in the law itself. But will the addition of 378 separate police authorities, overseered by Watch Committees and County Police Committees, to the 648 Boards of Guardians which will be made auxiliary to them, be likely to secure it? There is abundant "lack of uniformity" already, both in police methods and magisterial action, and the imposition of an entirely new duty will certainly make it worse than ever. The police have had no experience of the work, and if the present officers were taken over by them, they would be under the control of persons utterly ignorant of the system they had to administer, and only "muddle and mess" would result. Can we reason-

ably expect that this troublesome problem can be more effectively dealt with by novices than by those who have had all the experience? A man, when asked, "Can you play the violin?" replied, "I'm sure I don't know; I've never tried." The police have never tried this work, so says the Committee, they are sure to know how to do it. In par. 119, p. 33, the Report says:—

"An essential condition of any reform in the present system of the relief of vagrants is an extension of the area of chargeability and management."

Why should not joint committees of Guardians be appointed to deal with vagrancy over a group of Unions, even to the extent of a Poor Law district, and work in conjunction with the Local Government Board Inspector? It would be quite possible to arrange the distance between casual wards at from 12 to 15 miles, and close those that were too near; and adjust their contribution to the cost on equitable terms. This would be far better than police administration. Again, I object to the transfer because it would be an entire reversal of Poor Law methods and ideas. The vagrant is *now* dealt with at his own request. He arrests the Poor Law for his own support, as the law entitles him to do. The police would arrest the vagrant at their own will and pleasure; and I object to them having such power. The great mass of the people do not, and will not regard vagrancy as *crime*. "Begging," "sleeping out," "wandering without visible means of subsistence," are artificial and arbitrary offences, and not of the real essence of crime. Offences against the person and against property, *i.e.*, ordinary crime, are the proper concern of the police; but it is too late in the day to say that poverty should interfere with freedom of movement, or that begging is criminal. The general sentiment is opposed to such views, and a law that goes beyond that will soon be a dead letter. The evidence given by police and prison

authorities proves that there is little serious crime amongst this class, and Captain Eardley-Wilmot, a member of the Committee, and one of H.M. Prison Inspectors, calls them "a comparatively small and unimportant section of the prison population, and that the least criminal in the strictest sense." Now the whole training and discipline of the police are on repressive and punitive lines, and they would regard vagrancy from that point of view. You cannot put two entirely different persons into one police uniform; but that is what must be done if they are to take the place of the Guardians.

Then I object to this proposal because I believe it would be the first step towards the abolition of the Guardians themselves. The trend of legislation is towards greater centralisation, and those Guardians who have so precipitately agreed with the Report, and have asked the Local Government Board to initiate legislation on its lines, have been virtually helping to build their own coffin. In this case the police would be the masters; the Guardians and their officers would be their servants and subordinates, and it would, I feel sure, tend to lessen their influence and authority in the main department of their work. Mr Preston-Thomas, a Poor Law Inspector, in reply to query 625, says:—

"If we were beginning again, I imagine that we should put the vagrant under the police, because it is mainly *qua* vagrant, and not *qua* pauper, that he has to be treated; but we have got all the paraphernalia, and we have expended the money on casual wards, and probably the Committee will take the view that Lord Kimberley took in 1871, that so much had been spent in establishing the system in connection with the Poor Law that it was impossible then, and it would be much more costly and much more difficult now, to transfer it to any other body."

I claim Mr Preston-Thomas as my supporter

against the proposal. Time forbids me to deal with other objections.

2. With regard to the Way-ticket Scheme: I am afraid the Committee's plan is too rigid, and would not be adopted by genuine work seekers. I would rather try a suggestion made by Mr Preston-Thomas in the last Annual Report of the Local Government Board, p. 222 :—

“Any man out of employment might, *if he chose to do so*, apply to the police, and after inquiry would receive a certificate of his being a genuine labourer and not a professional beggar, having worked at a certain place. It would be in force for a certain time, and liable to withdrawal if he refused labour unnecessarily. Provided with this he should be entitled to be lodged and fed a single night at each casual ward, and to have a midday meal at a police station. At each Workhouse he should be employed for a short time, say, three hours in the early morning, and then be free to go in any direction he chose.”

Those who did not choose to ask for this police assistance would be dealt with in the ordinary way.

3. Now briefly let us consider the question of Vagrancy Offences and Labour Colonies.

I am bound to repeat my conviction that vagrancy offences are entirely distinct from ordinary crime. They are generally the result of false and unjust social and economic conditions; and the number of prosecutions and convictions for these arbitrary and artificial offences depends almost entirely upon the instructions given to the police and to the Workhouse authorities in the various districts. Neither is there any uniformity in the sentences of magistrates, some of whom will discharge the vagrant upon a promise to leave the district, while others will send him to prison for varying periods of a few days to a month or two. All this must be altered if anything at all approaching the Continental system of labour colonies is to be estab-

lished. But public opinion in this country is not ripe for such institutions as these : they are un-English in character, and opposed to the popular conviction that "force is no remedy." When it can be truthfully asserted that there is work for every willing hand to do, by which all man's natural wants can be supplied, you can justly apply force to the idle, and say, "He that will not work, neither shall he eat." But every charitable institution in the country proves that under existing social conditions the mass of the people cannot possibly fully provide for themselves ; and it is this conviction and experience that is at the root of the indiscriminate charity which the Report condemns, and so large a proportion of which comes from the poor themselves. Then, again, a large proportion of casual paupers are incapable of regular work. According to Poor Law classification, all under sixty years are called able-bodied ; but actually this is not the case. I have watched the admission and the bathing of vagrants in our casual ward at Nottingham, and there are but few whom I would choose if I were needing a temporary labourer. Though they appear fairly well-nourished, there are not many capable of standing the strenuous conditions of present-day employment, and the "reformatory influences" of the proposed colonies appear to me very vague and shadowy. But suppose that by a miracle you could at once transform this vagrant army of wastrels and ne'er-do-wells into willing and efficient workers, what will you do with them? You will but supply the "sweater" with fresh victims by flooding the already overcrowded labour market, and will only intensify the problem of the "unemployed." I must refer you to the Report for much interesting information about the various Continental systems, merely remarking that while their repressive effect has undoubtedly been great, their reformatory results are very problematical. The English colonies of the Salvation and Church

Armies are founded upon a religious basis, but there is no power of detention, and though a "measure of success is claimed, it is difficult to obtain figures that can be tested." The Report says, p. 73, par. 276 :—

"Generally, then, the information we have points to the fact that the existing labour colonies, whether voluntary or compulsory, exercise but little permanent reformatory influence. . . . There is a consensus of opinion that the evil resulting from the present conditions is so great that it is worth while going to the trouble and expense of making the experiment."

The "experiment," I believe, would end in failure.

There has been an exaggerated idea of the volume and extent of vagrancy, and though no exact statistics can be obtained, the Report estimates the total number of habitual vagrants at 20,000 to 30,000, rising in times of very bad trade to 60,000 or more, say from less than 1 per cent. to $1\frac{1}{2}$ or 2 per cent. of the population. Now Mr Preston-Thomas says that until 1905 the numbers relieved in casual wards in England in one night has never reached 9,000. On 1st July 1903 the number was 5,121 out of a population of 33 millions. In January 1905 there were 9,768, but towards the close of the year there was a large decrease. Of this highest number 887, or 9 per cent., were women, and 188, or 2 per cent., children. Their ages were as follows :—

	Males.	Females.
Sixteen years and under thirty-five . . .	2,156	132
Thirty-five years and under sixty-five . . .	6,143	660
Sixty-five years and upwards . . .	394	95

Now unless the vagrancy laws were made much more stringent it would be a very long time before any large number would be absorbed by the labour colonies, even if established, which I do not anticipate will be very soon. Mr Burns has stated in the House of Commons that it is futile to look for any considerable advantage through the establishment of these colonies, and that we must, on the contrary, turn to

the improvement of the conditions of employment, housing, and other facilities of livelihood in the country districts, to bring about a lessening or cessation of that over-migration into the towns which produces much pauperism and vagrancy. Mr Burns knows perhaps better than any previous holder of his office the root causes of poverty and vagrancy; and he is too strong and wise to act hastily and initiate legislation on this Report while the Royal Commission on the whole question of Poor Law administration is still sitting. In the meantime let the Local Government Board insist upon and enforce uniformity in the administration of the existing Order, replacing, if needs be, the optional clauses by stringent rules as to admission and discharge, diet, and task of work, and let its alleged inadequacy and unsuitability be fully proved before allowing it to be swept away and superseded by an entirely new system. I have read, since the above was written, in the *Local Government Chronicle*, the interesting controversy between Mr Joseph Everest, Clerk to the Atcham Union, and Sir William Chance. Mr Everest points out in detail the difficulties which will arise from the transfer of the vagrant to the charge of the police through the dual control which would be created. I quite agree with Mr Everest that both administrative and financial friction would result, and that the Committee's scheme would in practice do more harm than good. My own conviction is, that neither the present nor the suggested system of dealing with vagrancy will, or can, cure the evil—stern repression can never cure a state of things arising from bad and unjust social and economic conditions. The nation's conscience needs awaking to the fact that these are producing and reproducing poverty, pauperism, and vagrancy in an ever-increasing volume, and that for its own sake, and in its own highest interests, it must set itself strenuously to the task of reform.

Mr FRED W. MEE (Hunslet) then read the following paper—

THE VAGRANCY QUESTION AND THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE THEREON.

BY MR FRED. W. MEE,
Clerk to the Guardians, Hunslet Union.

PROBABLY no subject in Sociology has deservedly received more consideration than has that of Vagrancy, and it is consequently with no little feeling of timidity that I approach a question which legislators and Poor Law administrators have for generations found a very complex one, and which even the Departmental Committee, notwithstanding its careful investigations and the help which it has received from expert witnesses, has found difficult to deal with, and offer a few suggestions towards its elucidation.

Sentimentalism is prevalent nowadays and in no limited measure I fear even in our board rooms when subjects such as this are under discussion. "The sentimental will by-and-by," however, says Carlyle, "have to give place to the practical," and I therefore desire to say at the outset that it will be my endeavour in this paper to subordinate sentiment to reason, and keep those feelings of compassion towards the unfortunate, which it is sometimes forgotten that Poor Law administrators do occasionally possess, in proper subjection.

In her recently published book,* "Glimpses into the Abyss," Mrs Higgs makes a valuable contribution to the literature on the subject, and her labours in this direction are to be commended, though I cannot help thinking that if she had been as practical in her reasoning as in her search for experience, she would have

* "Glimpses into the Abyss," by Mary Higgs. Published by P. S. King & Son, Orchard House, Westminster. 3s. 6d. net.

arrived at somewhat different conclusions. In this connection one cannot help comparing the book with the evidence given by the authoress before the Departmental Committee. The "Abyss" is awful enough, but one can understand it appearing deeper to a woman of refined tastes than it really is, and one would imagine that a little closer acquaintance with some of the tramps she met would have caused her to take with some of their statements a little pinch of the salt she ought to have had with her porridge.

There are a few propositions I desire to enumerate in passing, arising out of Mrs Higgs' experiences, and they are these :—

1. The bath should have an adequate supply of water.
2. The food, even if plain, should be made thoroughly palatable.
3. Women should not be kept waiting with men for admission.
4. Females only should attend to the women.
5. Combs and brushes should be available in every ward.
6. Female vagrants might be usefully employed occasionally in *washing* vagrants' clothing.
7. Wet clothing should always be dried before bundling.

These are trifling matters, and possibly because of that fact they sometimes escape attention. I happen to live within ten miles of two of the wards visited by Mrs Higgs, and I can only say, with what I know of those Unions, that if matters such as this could there be overlooked, there must be many other Unions where the same or worse things are unnoticed.

Intelligently interested Guardians, conscientious officials, and "sanctified common-sense" all round, will soon put matters like these to rights.

NUMBER OF VAGRANTS.

It is very difficult indeed to arrive at an accurate estimate of the total number of vagrants. Even casual ward vagrants are difficult to estimate, as the total number of days maintained, or even the mean number on selected days of the year, give very little clue, there being so much "off and on" the roads, and "in and out" of casual wards and lodging houses.

This is proved by the different estimates made by capable persons, varying from 20,000 to 150,000. The Departmental Committee come to the conclusion that the number of people without settled home or visible means of subsistence varies from 30,000 or 40,000 in times of industrial activity to 70,000 or 80,000 in seasons of depression, and that of these the habitual vagrant does not number more than 20,000 to 30,000. This leads to the proposition that from 10,000 to 50,000 persons may be upon tramp at different times for temporary reasons.

CLASS OF VAGRANTS.

Leaving women and children out of account for obvious reasons, vagrants are divided by the Departmental Committee into four classes, viz. :—

1. The *bona fide* working man travelling in search of work.
2. Casual workers not desirous of or unfit for continuous work.
3. The habitual tramp always looking for work where it is least likely to be found, and trembling lest he should stumble across it.

4. The aged and infirm, and otherwise unemployable.

The proportion of *bona fide* cases in vagrant wards will not as a rule exceed 3 per cent. of the total, though at times I daresay the numbers passing through a ward near some large public works may easily run up to 15 per cent. The casual workers will for the same reason vary from 10 to 20 per cent. The

habitual tramp forms by far the largest proportion of all, though the incapable may easily equal 20 per cent.

In my own Union a special record was made by the then Workhouse master of all male vagrants passing through the vagrant wards between 2nd July 1903 and 4th August 1904, 4,103 persons and 5,101 separate admissions being recorded. 3,292 were admitted once; 510 twice; 131 thrice; 47, four times; 14, five times; 12, six times; 1, seven times; 2, eight times; 2, nine times; 1, twelve times; and 1, thirteen times. That shows that even in a thickly populated country the habitual tramp works a long way round, or, more probably, changes his name frequently.

The ages are as follows:—Under 30, 442 or 11 per cent.; between 30 and 45, 1,545 or 38½ per cent.; between 45 and 60, 1,212 or 30 per cent.; and over 60, 814 or 20 per cent.

The trades as given to us were:—Labourers, 2,509; Bricklayers, &c., 168; Engineers, 212; Painters, 146; Shoemakers, &c., 95; Colliers, 86; Tailors, 67; Ironmoulders, 66; Seamen, &c., 29; Clerks, 19; Tinsmiths, 12; and various trades the remaining 603, including 1 Jeweller, 1 Druggist, and 1 Pawnbroker. 79 were sick or disabled, 56 had wives or alleged wives with them, 25 were accompanied by children under 16, and 29 committed offences by absconsion or otherwise.

CAUSES OF VAGRANCY.

Is the vagrant (using the term in its widest sense) the creator or creature of his misfortune, the product of under or over civilisation? Does he represent inherent laziness, or is he the product of undisciplined energy? Is he an unit cast off the hub of our present-day strenuous industrial life, or has he never been in danger of being drawn on that hub? Are his habits derived or acquired? Is he born tired, or has he grown weary?

Much might be said on all these points did the

exigencies of time enable us to consider the subject strictly from the philosophical point of view, but it must suffice for to-day to make the proposition that vagrancy is attributable not merely to one, but more or less to all the causes mentioned.

I think the chief causes of vagrancy on the part of the vagrant are :—

1. *Hereditary*.—For it would be indeed strange if the influences which have been steadily at work down the ages since the first fratricide became the first vagabond, and have received impetus in this and most other countries by the bad social conditions of the people, should not have left a very strong mark on the habits and desires of the men of to-day ;

2. *Personal*.—Such as physical incapacity, bodily or mental weakness, drunkenness, laziness, and even matrimonial disputes ;

3. *Relative*.—To which is due in largest measure the presence of women and children on the roads ; and

4. *Industrial*.—The estimates of the Departmental Committee go to show that in periods of depression approximately one-half the vagrants are on tramp for this reason. In saying this, however, I am far from suggesting that all on the roads for industrial reasons are in search of work.

Then I think working men's homes and lodging houses have a deal to do with the creation of vagrants. A man falls out with his parents or parts from his wife, and in many cases he will make his way to one of these places as a sleeping place "just for a night or two," and thus takes a step down where he is more likely than not to remain.

It may appear unkind to name education as a cause of vagrancy, but I think it is one. All the figures I have seen go to show that 50 per cent. of vagrants are under forty-five years of age, and so have or ought to

have been at school, but under past methods the scholar of poor mental calibre has not been as educationally developed as he might have been, so has been easily outstripped by his more brilliant brother, and has drifted into the "corner boy" and odd job man of one decade, to be the vagrant and criminal of the next.

Probably, however, the greatest feeder of vagrancy is the indiscriminate giving of alms—miscalled charity—arising out of the unhealthy state of public feeling in regard to the subject. There is no manner of doubt that were it not for the warm-hearted but hot-headed folks who think they are doing God service by responding to every plausible appeal made to them, vagrancy would soon diminish. If all the money given to unknown and undeserving tramps was used instead in relieving known and deserving poor neighbours, there would be not only less paupers but more independence and a more healthy tone generally. Taking the 30,000 habitual vagrants alone, and the modest estimate of 6d. each per day exacted from the public in dole or toll, we have a total of £750 a day raised by begging. This is financially bad for the giver, and morally worse for the receiver, and ought to be stopped. The money is given ostensibly to save a man from the disgrace of entering the casual wards, but vagrancy like everything else lives by what it feeds on, and Weary Willie, who is better acquainted with the inside of a vagrant ward than most people, is quite content, so long as funds are forthcoming, to follow what he regards as the more excellent way of dodging a task, and having an extra day for calling on his patrons. The sin of indiscriminate charity cannot surely be better exemplified than in the case of women and children, who, it is well known, are frequently taken about the country in a manner detrimental to them both morally and physically, and merely to elicit the sympathy which the sight of a destitute woman or child inevitably arouses.

DEFECTS OF PRESENT SYSTEM OF TREATMENT.

No one will deny that the present system has its defects, and I think they are admitted to be chiefly these :—

1. Want of uniformity in carrying out casual ward regulations as well in regard to detention and task as to diet and accommodation.
2. Want of uniformity in dealing with offenders.
3. The great number of persons of the vagrant class who only occasionally, if at all, come under any effective supervision or control.
4. The want of any effective method of distinguishing the work seeker and the work dodger, or dealing equitably with both together.
5. Want of powers to prohibit unnecessary vagrancy, particularly women and child vagrancy.

Other evils exist, such as immorality, the want of cleanliness and the consequent spread of disease which are undoubtedly associated with vagrancy, but they belong more to the individual, and exist in spite of, rather than in consequence of, the present system of treatment.

These defects are in large measure the fault of the legislature and the central authority. Concerning the former it is singular that while the great Act of 1834 made the laws for the relief of resident poor more strict, it made those dealing with "rogues, vagabonds, and sturdy beggars" more easy. Parliament, proverbially slow, and never disposed to exert itself in seeking solutions to awkward questions if possible to avoid them, has been content to follow the lines of least resistance, and leave this thorny matter practically untouched ever since, with the result that the lazy vagabond is left in undisputed possession of his privileges, and conscious of his immunity from much restraint he is ready to do "the daily round," and if needs be, "the

common task," trusting to the gleanings by the wayside, and living in glorious hopes of a bed in the Workhouse equal to anyone else when his "travelling days are done."

Concerning Boards of Guardians the greatest complaint against them is lack of uniformity (a word beside which the blessed word Mesopotamia as a shibboleth is perfectly commonplace). Undoubtedly there is much dissimilarity of treatment in different Unions, but is this so much the fault of administration as the expression of varied thought and feeling for which latitude is allowed by the Local Government Board in their Orders? The great cry for years past in Poor Law administration has been for more elasticity, and this has been allowed in the treatment of casuals by giving Guardians a choice of meals, tasks, &c., to suit local circumstances. Elastic is a good thing in its way, but if stretched too much will make one sigh for reliable red tape; and if the elasticity which the Local Government Board has authorised has brought about different methods of treatment, who but the Local Government Board which provided for those variations is responsible for the lack of uniformity? I observe that two nights' detention is not enforced in 129 Unions (20 per cent. of the whole); bathing in 57 (9 per cent.); searching in 13 (2 per cent.); and tasks in 14 (2 per cent.). This, although not very alarming, is inexcusable in regard to bathing, searching, and tasks, and probably in most of the cases of want of detention. Guardians should remedy these matters themselves, and if they do not the Local Government Board can and should make them.

I believe thoroughly in uniformity of treatment wherever possible, and I believe many Boards of Guardians would welcome the issue of a Local Government Board Order on those lines now. As things are there is a strong temptation to keep the diet and accommodation low to drive the vagrant to more attractive places.

PROPOSED REMEDIES.

Concerning the proposed remedies for this condition of things I propose to deal with the recommendations of the Departmental Committee grouped in the same way as they are summarised in the Committee's Report, and to make my comments on each group of proposals rather than on each separate one.

CASUAL WARDS.

Under this head the following recommendations are made :—

1. Wards to be placed under control of police authority.
2. Existing buildings, where required, to be rented or purchased by police authority.
3. Superfluous wards to be discontinued.
4. Where practicable, existing officers of wards to be continued in office.
5. Where wards adjoin or form part of the Work-house, arrangements to be made with the Guardians for supply of stores, heating, &c.
6. Diet to be adequate, and provision to be made for mid-day meal on day of discharge.
7. Task of work to be enforced, and to be a time task.
8. Detention to be for two nights, except in the case of men with way tickets.
9. Expenses of wards to be charged to police funds.

The Committee base their proposal to transfer casual wards to the control of police authority on a want of uniformity among the 646 Unions ; because it "would be very costly" for the Guardians to provide separate cells for all cases ; because they think the present system is not an economical one ; and for "other reasons" which they should but do not name.

In the first place, it may be noted that the country

is divided now into 62 administrative counties, 67 county boroughs, and 249 other boroughs, or probably 379 separate police authorities which exercise jurisdiction over at least 734 petty sessional divisions. Such control can be no more conducive to uniformity than the present system. As to the cost of separate cells, the Committee agree as to the advantages of this provision, but say some Unions cannot afford to establish them. Are the police authorities, then, to provide cells in all cases? And if so, where will the saving in cost under this head come in?

It is proposed that existing buildings shall be rented or purchased by the police authority and that masters of Workhouses, or other officers having charge of vagrant wards, shall continue to superintend them on behalf of the police until an opportunity arises to replace them by "retired constables who are drawing pensions from county funds." The police authority are apparently to be masters and the Guardians and their officers are to do the charing for them. It is not stated if the superannuated policemen are to be paid for their services in addition, but from the economical motives which lie behind the recommendations, I presume it is not so, in which case very little if any responsibility will attach to the officer in charge.

Where the wards form part of the Workhouse, arrangements may be made with the Guardians to warm them, to provide hot water, and to supply food and other necessities *at cost price*, the latter being regarded as "a very simple matter" when the Workhouse master is in charge of the wards.

As regards cooking, washing, and disinfecting, also the treatment of the sick, the wards could not be managed for a week without the Guardians' help. Nothing is said about labour, but sooner or later an additional labour master will be necessary.

If the police authority do not require any particular ward, the Guardians may use it for any purpose they

think fit, and if it is a separate building they may dispose of it by sale. Doubtless many Guardians here will be able to call to mind how their receiving wards, clothing stores, workshops, &c., are inseparably mixed up with the vagrant wards and how utterly unsatisfactory it would be to have dual control. Apart from the extra cost of separate management, it is obvious that a tramp ward alone cannot be as economically managed as a large Workhouse and the anticipated saving in cost may be looked upon as mythical.

I attach little importance to the argument that the police would be always at hand to deal with a refractory case and that the chief constable could make recommendations in his quarterly reports as to closing superfluous wards or opening new ones. The superannuated constable would be in no better position than the tramp master is now, if so good an one, for dealing with refractory cases. Unnecessary tramp wards can be closed now if desired, but it must be remembered that new ones cannot be put up in five minutes and that there are obvious disadvantages in having to refer to the chief constable of the county in the event of the accommodation proving temporarily insufficient.

The matter of control must, however, be looked at from a higher than a mere £ s. d. point of view. A reduction in expense may not be economy any more than additional cost is necessarily waste. If all vagrants were past redemption something might be said in favour of repression, but while a fair number of deserving cases are to be met with on the roads, public opinion will be outraged if the iron heel is attempted to be placed upon them.

The police have not shown by their action in regard to begging that they are possessed of any special fitness for dealing with the vagabond class, while as to the more deserving cases it is monstrous that they should be regarded as semi-criminals.

On 1st January 1905 9,768 vagrants occupied beds

in the various vagrant wards in the country, of whom 8,693 were adult males. Leaving women and children out of count and supposing each man to be detained two nights and that he begged of only four persons between tramp ward and tramp ward, 17,386 begging offences would be committed daily by casual ward vagrants alone, to say nothing of the many beggars who seldom come near the tramp wards, yet on the 28th February 1905 only 783 men were in prison for begging offences.

Uniformity will neither be obtained through Guardians of the Poor nor the police unless it is applied by the central authority, in which case it can be just as well secured through the first as the second. Given the same powers it is proposed to confer on the police (which Guardians have long asked for) I have no doubt that, in spite of certain inherent weaknesses of popularly elected bodies, the vagrancy laws can be more effectively and with less rigour and hardship dealt with by the Poor Law than by the police.

Guardians have been threatened with a clipping of their wings in several ways in recent years, and the threat has been partly carried out in connection with relief of the unemployed, but this is, I believe, the first carefully considered recommendation of a responsible Committee that the relief of any form of distress should be entirely transferred to another authority, and should therefore be strenuously resisted until more satisfactory cause is shown.

The proposals for an adequate but more uniform dietary and for provision of a mid-day meal on day of discharge to avoid any excuse for begging are good.

ASSISTANCE TO WORK SEEKERS.

Under this head the Committee recommend—

10. Tickets to be issued by the police to persons who are *bona fide* in search of work.

11. The ticket to be for a definite route and to be available only for a month, with power to police to alter route if necessary.

12. The holder of a ticket to be entitled to lodging, supper, and breakfast at the casual ward and to leave as early as he desires after performing a small task.

13. Such ticket holder to have a ration of bread and cheese for mid-day meal given him on leaving casual ward in the morning.

14. Information as to work in the district to be kept at casual wards and police stations for assistance of work seekers.

The way-ticket system has been carried out by the Poor Law authorities in the county of Gloucester with success and is one that has been consistently advocated for many years.

It used to be more generally the case for police officers to act as assistant relieving officers for vagrants, and the practice undoubtedly deterred many tramps from visiting the vagrant wards, though I doubt if there was any material diminution in the number of casuals. In Leeds and other places the system was put an end to years ago by the police authorities as not being a suitable or desirable one. From returns obtained by the Committee from the chief constables of 57 counties, in 21 of them the police are not so employed, while 25 others have only 185 officers altogether, or an average of 7 in each county, engaged in such work, and it is unlikely that there would be that number were it not that they are usually employed and paid for their special services by the Guardians. Experience does not in this respect, therefore, point to any advantage in the proposed transfer of authority, and, for my own part, I am strongly opposed to it.

I agree with the proposals as to the way-ticket system, but my own views carry me further than is suggested.

There are certain well defined objects in the minds of both Guardians and vagrants, viz. :—

a. The Guardians, while anxious to “choke off” the loafer, desire to treat the tramp as liberally as they safely dare.

b. The Guardians are anxious that the physical and mental weakling, and the decrepit, shall cease to be on the road.

c. The genuine work seeker is anxious to get on his journey.

d. The loafer in many cases enters the casual wards for a wash up and rest, and has no desire to proceed too hurriedly, so is not at all deterred by the two nights’ detention and task.

My proposal would be to apply the way-ticket or license system all round, and make it an offence for any person to be on tramp without a way-ticket or visible means of subsistence. The ticket (or license) should only be given by the Chairman or Clerk of a Board of Guardians, after satisfactory inquiries, by the Relieving Officer, to residents in their Union or district but not for longer than a month at a time; and should only be renewable from that Union, so that the man would be bound to keep in touch with his home, and would be unable to adopt the present expedient of changing his name to avoid discovery. A man entering a ward without his ticket or license should be detained until his last residence was found and a new license obtained, or be removed back there. Good food, good baths, and good beds, should be provided; and everything done to make the man as thoroughly fit as possible for his tramp. Under this system the genuine work seeker would be benefited; the work dodger would be kept constantly on the trot and taught the advantages of honest toil; the mendicant would have no excuse for begging, which might very well be prohibited; the blind, lame, sick, and silly would be

forced to the shelter of the Workhouse where they ought to be now, and any offence in any part of the country could be reported and recorded at the place of issue.

It will be urged that this is an interference with the liberty of the subject. Liberty for what : Begging, stealing, incendiarism, drunkenness, and worse ? Then the sooner such liberty is ended, and a license to travel in comfort conditional on good behaviour is substituted the better. It will doubtless also be urged that I am offering for nothing what the common lodging house cannot do for reward, and that I am driving men to the lodging house. My answer is that the only lodging house they could possibly stay at for more than a month would be one in their own town. The lodging houses will be forced by stress of competition to improve their wretched conditions, and whether or not they are ultimately taken over by the municipalities they will undoubtedly have to comply with more strict bye-laws than exist at present.

VAGRANCY OFFENCES.

The Committee recommend :—

15. Discouragement of short sentences, and where sentence would be for less than fourteen days that it be made for one day only, and the conviction recorded.

16. Habitual vagrants to be sent to certified labour colonies for detention for not less than six months nor more than three years.

There is little to urge against the proposed limitation of short sentences, though it must be remembered that in over half the cases now the sentences do not exceed fourteen days, and I fear it may lead justices to reduce all sentences under the mistaken idea that it will facilitate detention, and so enable the loafer who is here to-day and gone to-morrow, and who, in the absence of a way-ticket system applicable

to him, can drop all trace of his conviction at the next town he visits, to have a better time of it than ever.

I am sorry the Committee do not emphasise the necessity of the police devoting more energy to the suppression of begging, the very life-blood of the tramp.

LABOUR COLONIES.

The Committee propose on this subject :—

17. Labour colonies for habitual vagrants to be certified by the Secretary of State, and generally to be subject to regulations made by him.

18. County and county borough councils to be empowered to establish labour colonies, or to contribute to certified colonies established by other bodies.

19. Exchequer contributions to be made towards cost of maintenance in colonies.

20. Subsistence dietary to be prescribed, and inmates to be able to earn small sums of money, and by means of canteen to supplement their food allowance.

21. Discharge before conclusion of sentence to be allowed on certain conditions.

22. Industrial as well as agricultural work to be carried on.

The proposals in this connection are on the whole satisfactory and worthy of support, and can be carried out without detriment to the authority of the Guardians or the interests of deserving cases. It is obvious that colonies must be for fairly large areas, and failing voluntary combination among Unions on such a scale as can hardly be expected, there is little alternative to the proposed county establishments.

ECONOMY IN BUILDINGS.

No. 23 is a recommendation that buildings for casual wards and in connection with labour colonies should be erected cheaply, though, as I have pointed

out before, separate cells which are described as costly are recommended. The requirements of the central authority and the rates of wages, &c., have much to do with the cost, but in any case, if the county authorities are to erect the buildings, the admonition to exercise economy may not prove altogether out of place.

COMMON LODGING HOUSES, &c.

There are recommendations that common lodging houses should be licensed annually by the local authority, who should be required to exercise strict supervision and control, and that the police should have right of entry. This has been tried in Leeds, amongst other places, and is desirable.

It is also proposed that shelters should be licensed and regulated by the local authority, who should be at liberty, if thought desirable, to veto the distribution of free food.

Also that the laws to prevent spread of disease amongst tramps should be more strictly enforced.

The definition of sleeping-out is proposed to be extended so as to include sleeping in buildings or on enclosed premises, or so as to be a danger or nuisance.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN.

What I had hoped would prove among the best of the recommendations are that women and child vagrants shall be received into the Workhouse instead of the casual wards, but I fear the proposals do not go far enough.

To admit a woman into the Workhouse while her husband, if she has one, goes into the tramp ward, and allow her to take her discharge at the same time and go on tramp again with him, is an illustration of how not to do a thing.

Children are, in the same way, to be allowed to

go forward with their parents unless adopted by the Guardians.

Whatever necessity there may be for men to be on tramp, there is none for the dragging about of women and children, and it should be prohibited.

From a census made in the Hunslet Union two years ago, 51 per cent. of the women had been on tramp over twelve months, 40 per cent. had been over three years, 23 per cent. over six years, 15 per cent. over ten years, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. over twenty years. The Committee seem to anticipate that the removal of men from the roads will bring about a great diminution in the number of women and children, but my view is that the removal of women and children will bring about less men vagrants. Seven or eight years ago my Board passed a resolution urging the detention of the children of vagrants for a sufficient time to enable them to be returned to their place of settlement. It was reported in some of the papers that it had been *decided* to detain such children, with the result that for some time afterwards no children whatever were brought into our wards.

I suggest that it should be made an offence to take women and children on the roads, and that there should be power to detain women and children pending inquiries into settlement, and to remove them to where they belong, making it an offence for them to become chargeable again at *any* other Workhouse within, say, six months. It costs no more to maintain a case in a Workhouse for an entire year than to keep it in twenty or thirty Workhouses for the same length of time, and is much less demoralising. If female and child vagrancy were stopped to-morrow, and all cases taken into the Workhouse, I have no doubt that with a little extra help in the clerks' offices they could all be removed in a couple of months to their different places of settlement, and the roads be free of them without hardship to anyone.

The Committee pin their faith to the power of adopting control of children, but unless there is power of detention there can be no adoption, because even if the Guardians happen to be meeting at the time it is impossible in one day to get sufficient evidence to justify adoption, and no Board of Guardians will be foolish enough to take the charge of a vagrant child without full inquiries as to its history, and adequate knowledge as to the financial responsibility involved.

The only thing I have to add is the expression of the earnest hope that matters will be suffered to drift no longer, but that something will soon be done to reclaim the flotsam and jetsam of to-day, and purify, even at the expense of forced and hard but honest toil, the life of the generations to come.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. H. P. SMITH (Sleaford) said they were very much indebted to the readers of the thoughtful and helpful papers they had listened to. (Hear, hear.) Vagrants might be divided into two distinct classes—the really genuine tramp and the unfortunate working man who has to go on the road in search of work. These men wanted treating in different ways, but they both wanted taking off the road. (Hear, hear.) A good deal might be done to help the *bona-fide* working man if labour bureaux were started in the country. (Hear, hear.) The real tramp had deteriorated in both his mental and moral capacity. He had arrived at that stage when he could not help himself, and he should be dealt with in the same way as they dealt with imbeciles, taught to work, and allowed a little money to make a start. If he would not work, then he should be given a longer period in the labour colony. To leave such men on the road was dangerous, as they might infect the honest workman with their own ways of life. He did not agree that a large number of tramps were hereditary. (Hear, hear.) To a large extent vagrants were caused by the dislocation of labour, strikes, and the Workmen's Compensation Act. (Hear, hear.) In consequence of the provisions of that Act, employers would not run the risk of employing middle-aged men, and what were those men to do? Then there was the transfer of capital abroad. This was a most serious national question, and something ought to be done in it. (Hear, hear.)

Mr HEATH (Brigg) said he would like to deal mainly with Mr Palmer's paper. The police were said not to be the proper parties

to deal with the beggar, but the police had already something to do with him. Why not put the whole matter into their hands instead of dividing it between them and the Guardians? The honest vagrant should be separated from the individual who never would work, and the police were far more likely to trace the origin of a man than a Poor Law Guardian. He differed with Mr Palmer as to the wrong-doings of beggars. A man who was a habitual tramp only differed in a small degree from the man who stole outright. If a man would not work he should not eat. (Hear, hear.) No reference had been made that day to the Continental system of dealing with the vagrancy question. It was a system which might not be perfect, but which might be capable of amendment by Englishmen. In Belgium, Germany, and Austria they had succeeded in very nearly suppressing the casual, but they dealt honestly and fairly with the man who wanted work. (Hear, hear.) It was all very well to talk about disturbing the liberties of an Englishman, but he did not think an Englishman ought to have liberty to live on other people's earnings. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. C. HARRISON (Basford) said the two papers approached the subject from very different points of view, but he thought that Mr Mee had dealt with the matter most exhaustively. A good deal had been said about the cause of vagrancy, and he thought he was right in saying that Mr Palmer mainly attributed the cause to the wrong or defective economic conditions. None of them would say that their economic conditions were all that could be desired. He thought he was justified in saying that even the socialistic propaganda of to-day had something to do with the existence of vagrancy. Some of the extreme socialist views put forward had a tendency to make some men think that they had a grievance and had a right to live upon other people and ought not to work. With regard to the indiscriminate giving of charity, that was the very life-blood of the tramp system. (Hear, hear.) He had often wondered why their parish councils could not add to their very onerous duties, the duty of calling together the parishoners in public meeting and getting them to pass a resolution that in that parish at any rate tramps should not be relieved. (Hear, hear.) If they did that they would check the tramp evil. (Hear, hear.) Then there was another cause of vagrancy which had not been mentioned, and that was the admission into this country of the alien. Some of those present had doubtless had a smell of the German gipsies who were in this country. (Laughter.) Those gipsies were tramping about, and in his district there were twenty-five police officers dancing attendance upon them, and as far as he could gather the gipsies were masters of the situation. If such people were allowed to come into this country it would aggravate the tramp question considerably. (Hear, hear.) The economic conditions of this country might improve in the course of time, but in the meantime what was to be done. They must see that they did not constitute another cause for vagrancy. The ques-

tion of remedy should be uniform. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion, he expressed his strong belief in labour colonies.

Mr E. CLARKE (Bourne) said the tramp question was a very complex one; how it should be treated was a matter of different opinions. There was a great want of uniformity in dealing with it, for whilst some Unions were dealing very harshly with tramps, others treated them leniently, and they naturally flocked to that Workhouse where they were most comfortable. Then, Guardians wanted to discriminate between the worthy and the worthless. (Hear, hear.) There was one thing he would like to say, and that was that although he came from a very insignificant Union, he thought he could say that they had there solved the vagrancy problem. In the first place, when they saw there was the least likelihood of a man or woman becoming habitual vagrants, they took their children into the Workhouse, gave them an education and sent them out into the world to become good citizens. They had had cases where the parents had gone on the road and came back from some other Union bringing them another child. (Laughter.) Of course that was a thing they naturally expected, but he would tell them what his Board did. They kept the child and they also kept the mother. He believed that if all Boards of Guardians would follow that course, they would find, in time, that vagrancy materially diminished. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs PRATT (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) said she believed that the proper working of the Aliens Act would have a great effect upon the vagrancy question. (Hear, hear.) If England was to be made the dumping ground of the scum of all nations, the honest workman was bound to suffer. (Hear, hear.) A more strict enforcement of the law against begging would also do something and it was most important that women and children should be kept off the roads. (Hear, hear.)

Miss VAUDREY (Derby) concurred with the last remark. She thought that religious influence would be the only influence felt in their labour colonies as coined by the Salvation Army Colony and the work of the Church Army. (Hear, hear.)

Mr J. ADCOCK (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) agreed that the Guardians and not the police were the proper persons to deal with the poverty of the nation. (Hear, hear.) The police dealt with crime, but poverty was not a crime. (Hear, hear.) The man who dealt with crime was not exactly the man to deal with poverty, and if any solution of this question was to come, it would be much more likely to come through the Guardians. (Hear, hear.) They could deal with the tramp in three ways. They could kill him off, but that would not stop the supply. (Laughter.) Then they had to go back and ask themselves the question, "Where does the tramp come from?" The nation had determined not to keep the tramp in idleness, and if they were not going to do that, how were they going to deal with him? They must find him work to do and put him in harness in such a form that he could not possibly get away from it.

(Hear, hear.) The tramp had sense enough not to work for himself whilst he could live on the energies of others. If they made it clear that there was work for those who would work and nothing for the man who would not, then the question would be solved. (Hear, hear.) The speaker went on to advocate that work should be found for the unemployed on the roads of the country.

Mr THOMAS WARD (Nottingham) pointed out that if the £180,000,000 spent in drink in this country could be diverted into a proper channel there would then be work for all. (Hear, hear.) He thought it should be made a criminal offence for parents to drag young children about the country. (Hear, hear.)

Mr F. S. HERNE (Leicester) contended that men stopped at the right psychological moment would never develop into tramps. Habitual vagrants should be looked after by the State, who should form labour colonies, with power of detention. (Hear, hear.)

Mr DERN (Basford) expressed strong opposition to the management of the tramp passing into the hands of the police. The police were not the class of men to deal with the tramp, for they would not bestow the trouble to investigate a man's position, nor would they give that thought and care to discriminate between the man who was on the road through misfortune and the habitual roadster. (Hear, hear.) Honest men who wanted work ought to be kept out of the hands of the police. (Hear, hear.) Then what was to become of the great mass of humanity who were thrown on the country after a certain age by those employers who did not want them? This was a question which would have to be faced in the future. In his opinion, the large firms of the country who had had the best out of a man should be made responsible for that man being kept off the rates when they themselves had done with him. (Hear, hear.)

Mr THOS. PALMER, replying to the discussion, said he had thought that some of his views might have called forth a little more comment than they had, because some of them verged upon socialism. In his opinion, the man or woman who went to the lodging-house was quite separate from those who were found in vagrant wards. (Hear, hear.) It was said in the official report of the Committee which sat upon the question, that a colony of the German type was of little use in dealing with the tramp class. (Hear, hear.) He was afraid there were very few Boards of Guardians who carried out the Orders of the Local Government Board in the way they were expected.

Mr F. W. MEE also replied, and impressed upon his hearers the great necessity of uniformity in Poor Law work. (Hear, hear.) He was afraid that the roots of vagrancy were too deep to pull up, but Guardians might cut the plant as near the ground as possible. (Hear, hear.) In conclusion, he said he did not think that the majority of tramps came on the road as children. (Hear, hear.)

VOTES OF THANKS.

Mr J. L. P. BARBER rose to move a vote of thanks to the readers of papers, remarking that all they had heard had been most interesting and instructive. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. STOREY seconded the motion, which was carried, and Mr PALMER responded.

Rev. C. HARRIS next moved a vote of thanks to the Derby Guardians for their excellent hospitality and also to Mr N. Twigge, Clerk to the Derby Board, for organising the dinner. (Hear, hear.)

This was seconded and agreed to, the compliment being gracefully acknowledged by Mr TWIGGE.

Mr CLAUD BARKER proposed a vote of thanks to the Chairman and the Hon. Secretary, Mr Strutt. (Hear, hear.) He referred to the courtesy with which Mr Rolfe had treated all the delegates, and to Mr Strutt's long and valuable services in the important position he occupied.

The motion was carried with applause.

The CHAIRMAN and the HON. F. STRUTT briefly responded, and the proceedings terminated.

Many of the delegates, after the close of the Conference on Thursday, availed themselves of the opportunity kindly given them of visiting the Midland Railway Locomotive Works, the Derby China Factory, and other places of interest.

The Childrens' Homes in connection with the Derby Union especially interested a large number of the delegates, who inspected the Receiving Home and the various Scattered Homes.

South-Western District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

FOURTEENTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE SOUTH-WESTERN DISTRICT, COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF CORNWALL, DEVON, DORSET,
SOMERSET, AND WILTS, HELD AT THE GUILD-
HALL, BATH, ON WEDNESDAY AND THURSDAY,
10TH AND 11TH OCTOBER 1906.

President—SIR THOMAS DYKE ACLAND, BART.

Vice-President—REV. PREB. B. NORTON THOMPSON
(Chairman, Bath Union).

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

CORNWALL.

ST AUSTELL—

Purcell, Rev. Canon (Chairman).
Coode, Miss Jane.
Dyer, Captain S.
Varcoe, J. F.

BODMIN—

Carpenter, G. C.
Guy, Miss.
Wills, Miss.

FALMOUTH—

Enys, J. D. (Chairman).
Fox, Mrs Wilson.

ST GERMANS—

Jennings, Rev. H. R.
Spear, J.

HELSTON—

Vyvyan, Rev. C. S.
Rosewarne, W.

LAUNCESTON—

Rattenbury, S. P. (Chairman).
Tregoning, J. S.
White, G. Graham (Clerk).

LISKEARD—

Edgcumbe, R.
Harris, W. D.

PENZANCE—

Borlase, Miss.
Cornish, J. B.
Dale, Mrs.

REDRUTH—

Beauchamp Beauchamp, B. (Chairman).
Peter, Thurstan C. (Clerk).
Trebilcock, W. J.

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued.*

STRATTON—

Smeeth, J. J. (Chairman).
Thynne, Rev. Canon (Vice-Chairman).
Banbury, A.

TRURO—

Graves, Rev. W. E.
Hancock, C.
Paull, Miss L.

DEVON.

AXMINSTER—

Lovell, H. Haynes.

BIDEFORD—

Dimond-Churchward, Rev. Preb. (Chairman).
Duncan, A. G. (Vice-Chairman).

CREDITON—

Densham, R. (Chairman).
Shelley, Sir J., Bart. (Vice-Chairman).
Pope, W. (Clerk).

EAST STONEHOUSE—

Wills, J. C. (Chairman).
Tuttle, R. S.

EXETER—

Bird, Rev. Preb. (Governor).
Finch, C. T. W.
Saunders, G. E.

KINGSBRIDGE—

Willing, T. (Chairman).

NEWTON-ABBOT—

Heath, W. H.
Mortimer, W. H.

OKEHAMPTON—

Brealy, R. F. (Vice-Chairman).
Pease, T. H. O.

PLYMOUTH—

Child, Rev. W. H.
Underhill, F.

PLYMPTON ST MARY—

Crossing, W. J. (Chairman).
Giles, H. J. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Bickle, J. W. (Clerk).

TAVISTOCK—

Bowhay, T. T.

ST THOMAS—

Buckingham, Rev. F. F. (Chairman).
Campfield, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Nethercott, J. R.
Trick, W. B. (Clerk).

TIVERTON—

Dester, W. (Chairman).
Fisher, Mrs.

TORRINGTON—

Moore-Stevens, Colonel R. A. (Chairman).

TOTNES—

Kingwell, J. R. T. (Chairman).
Drake, Miss M. A. B.

DORSET.

BEAMINSTER—

Williams, Rev. F. (Chairman).
Kitson, J. L.
Peto, Sir H., Bart.

BLANDFORD—

Salmon, Rev. F. (Chairman).
Askew, Rev. R. R.

BRIDPORT—

Colfox, Miss A. L.
Crick, Rev. F. W.
Hodges, J. B.

CERNE—

Holford, Mrs.
Wyatt, J.
Cole, A. E. A. (Clerk).

POOLE—

Curtis, G. (Chairman).
Frampton, H. G. B.

STURMINSTER—

Baverstock, F. G. (Vice-Chairman).

WAREHAM AND PURBECK—

Bond, G. D. (Chairman).
Pinney, R. E.

SOMERSET,

BATH—

Clayton, Colonel.
Hope, Miss.
Rose, J. W.
Stcart, W.

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued.*

BRIDGWATER—
Hurman, Mrs.

CHARD—
Beviss, W. Salter (Chairman).
Lean, J.
Ross, F. G. (Clerk).

CLUTTON—
Dury, J. S. (Clerk).

DULVERTON—
Bailey, B.
Barrow, R. Sowton (Clerk).
Tapp, J.

FROME—
Ames, Mrs.
Edgell, Rev. E. M. R.

KEYNSHAM—
Caple, G. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Rolleston, Colonel.
Torrance, J. R.
Martin, C. (Clerk).

LONG ASHTON—
Fry, Miss J. M.
Pearce, T. H.

TAUNTON—
Bruford, R.
Musgrave, G.
Westlake, W. H.
Dawe, W. F. B. (Clerk).

WELLINGTON—
Price, W. Sydney (Clerk).

WELLS—
Morland, Miss Amy.
Rossiter, H. G.
Russ, A. G. (Clerk).

WILLITON—
Hosegood, T. (Chairman).
Luttrell, Capt. A. F. (Vice-Chairman).

WINCANTON—
Lock, G.
Moore, F. S.

WILTS.

BRADFORD-ON-AVON—
Beaven, Mrs A. J.
Wilkins, W. J.

CHIPPENHAM—
Field, W.
Fry, J. H.
Fuller, Mrs.

CRICKLADE AND WOOTTON BASSETT—
Twine, G.

DEVIZES—
Ferris, T. W.
Robbins, W.
Fox, J. R.
Smith, T.

MERE—
White, A. R. (Chairman).
Harding, J. A.
Somerset, Her Grace the Duchess of.

SALISBURY—
Hunt, Mrs.
Roberts, Mrs.

SWINDON AND HIGHWORTH—
Atcherley, G.
Moore, R.

TISBURY—
Keevil, W. C. (Vice-Chairman).
Richards, H.

TROWBRIDGE AND MELKSHAM—
Chapman, I.
Mann, Miss Effie.
Rogers, A.

WARMINSTER—
Morgan, W. F. (Chairman).
Blanche, Lady Pelly.
Maxfield, Miss.
Scott, H.

WESTBURY AND WHORWELLSDOWN—
Cary, W. H. (Chairman).
Perrett, J. G.
Rogers, W.

WILTON—
Fisher, Major.
Reece-Heal, Rev. W.
Wilson, G. M. (Clerk).

400 SOUTH-WESTERN DISTRICT CONFERENCE

The Camelford Union did not appoint Delegates, but was represented by the Chairman (Rev. R. J. Roe), who attended as a Visitor.

OTHER VISITORS.

Fleming, Baldwyn, L.G.B.	Joseph, Miss (Guardian, Williton).
Thomas, H. Preston, L.G.B.	Macdonald, Rev. F. W. (Guardian, Williton).
Wethered, E. B., L.G.B.	Worsley, Miss.
Mason, Miss, L.G.B.	Gunter, Miss D.
Gooch, G. P., M.P.	Clarence, O. B.
Fry, Miss Norah L.	Howell, Mrs Ferrers.
Dowding, Miss M. Keith.	And many members of the Bath Board of Guardians.
Coode, Mrs Athelstan (Guardian, Wells).	

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—

CORNWALL.—Camelford, St Columb Major.

DEVON.—Barnstaple, Devonport, Holsworthy, Hoxiton, South Molton.

DORSET.—Dorchester, Shaftesbury, Sherborne, Weymouth, Wimborne and Cranborne.

SOMERSET.—Axbridge, Langport, Shepton Mallet, Yeovil.

WILTS.—Amesbury, Calne, Malmesbury, Marlborough, Pewsey.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE RATEPAYERS IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION. By Mr F. UNDERHILL (<i>Guardian, Plymouth Incorporation</i>) - -	405
And the Rev. L. R. PHELPS (<i>Vice-Chairman, Oxford Incorporation</i>) - - - - -	414
YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES. By Miss MARY CLIFFORD (<i>Guardian, Parish of Bristol</i>) - - - - -	434
THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY. By Colonel E. CLAYTON (<i>Guardian, Bath Union</i>)-	445

WEDNESDAY, 10TH OCTOBER.

The MAYOR (Mr Charles Bryan Oliver, J.P.) said it was his privilege as Mayor of Bath to give a hearty welcome to the delegates of the South-Western Poor Law Conference. (Cheers.) He looked upon these Conferences which took place in various parts of the country as of the greatest use in working out complex questions in connection with the relief of the necessitous poor. The rates pressed heavily upon many, and he believed that in the papers to be brought before them certain suggestions would be made with the view of amending their present system. There was one direction in which he personally felt most strongly that there was a crying need for reform. He referred to the Cottage Home system for children.

He would do everything that lay in his power to see that those children who were unfortunately placed in those Cottage Homes should have every reasonable amount of education and proper food given them so that they might be brought up as good and proper citizens of the Empire. (Cheers.) At the same time he thought that it was a question in which reform was greatly needed. In Bath the cost per head for children in the Cottage Homes was something like 6s. 9d. per week. This meant that for five children the cost amounted to 33s. 9d., against which they had to put the fact that many a skilled mechanic had to keep a family of five children upon 25s. a week. If they took a man and his wife and three children it worked out, if the man's wages were 25s., that they had to live at a cost of 5s. per week each, and out of that, money had to be provided to pay the rates to keep those who were in the Cottage Homes. He was not suggesting that Boards of Guardians spent more money than was absolutely necessary, but if a respectable man, who worked hard and tried to keep his head above water, had to maintain his children on 5s. per week, it seemed rather hard that he should have to provide money to keep other people's children at a cost of 6s. 9d. (Hear, hear.) They knew that the question of the "ins-and-outs" was and always had been a very great trouble. When a family went to the Workhouse it depended absolutely upon the will of the parents as to how long the children remained in the Cottage Homes, where they were fed, properly clothed, and taught. The children were frequently kept wandering about like waifs and strays, and the good the Cottage Homes had done them was absolutely lost. He recognised that it was a great and difficult problem to know how these people should be dealt with, but he did hope that that Conference would be able to suggest something that the Government could go upon. He knew that it was difficult for the State to be the parent of the child, whilst the working man had to maintain his children at a far less sum than had to be spent on those in the Cottage Homes. That was a point upon which he felt very strongly, and he did hope that the subject might be discussed at that and other Conferences with profitable results. It gave him the greatest pleasure to welcome them to the city of Bath, and he trusted to see them one and all at his reception at the Roman Promenade that night. (Cheers.) He concluded by asking Sir Thomas Dyke Acland to take the chair, and Sir Thomas did so amid loud cheers.

The Hon. SECRETARY (Mr A. G. Ferrers Howell) read letters expressing regret at inability to be present from a number of persons, including the Bishop of Bath and Wells, the Marquis of Bath, Sir Edward Fry, Mr Foxcroft, J.P., D.L., the Rev. L. R. Phelps, and Miss Clifford. Sir William Chance had, he said, written a letter which bore on the subject of that afternoon. He said:—"As to the increasing burden on the ratepayers, you will notice that the increase of relief expenditure in the provinces has occurred since 1890. I think that Parliament is really responsible for this, and not

the Guardians, on account of the socialistic legislation of that period, the agitation for old age pensions, and the resulting Outdoor Relief (Friendly Societies) Act, and Mr Chaplin's well-meant but mischievous circular. We are losing sight of the principles by which our Poor Law should be guided, and are landing ourselves 'nowhere.' The South-Western District is to be commended among all other districts for its reduction of pauperism during the last few years, Somerset and Devon being particularly distinguished in this matter. (Cheers.) The preaching of Mr Preston Thomas has not been wasted. Long may he prosper. (Cheers.) Please remember me to all my friends, and say how sorry I am I cannot be with them."

The PRESIDENT, who was received with cheers, said :—In opening the proceedings of this Conference my first duty is to thank the Right Worshipful Mayor of Bath and his colleagues for their invitation to us, and for the hearty welcome they have accorded us, and to express the conviction that not only the delegates and others who have met here in conference on the important subjects which appear on our agenda, but also the visitors from Bath and the neighbourhood who attend our debates, will have reason to join with us in the thanks which we shall tender to the Mayor and Corporation. (Cheers.) The subjects before us are all of great importance. It is a matter of very great regret that neither Mr Phelps nor Miss Clifford are able to read their own papers, and we shall greatly miss their presence in our deliberations ; our thanks are due to them none the less for kindly having sent their papers for our discussion. In their absence Mr Ferrers Howell will read the paper which Mr Phelps has written, whilst Mrs Coode will read that by Miss Clifford. As in previous years, Mr Preston Thomas has furnished me with a few points on which it is well that I should say a few words. He informs me that the population continues to decrease in the agricultural districts, a fact which seems to me to present a problem of considerable difficulty, for, as far as I am able to gather, both from experience and from inquiry, agriculture in the West of England is by no means now as much depressed as it was a few years ago, or as it still remains in other parts of England, and agricultural employment is certainly by no means difficult to get ; but, on the other hand, it is rather more difficult for the farmers to get labourers than for labourers to get employment. (Hear, hear.) One cannot wonder that the urban population should increase more rapidly than the rural, because when the place of one labourer becomes vacant, one of his family is sufficient to fill his place, the others must find work elsewhere, and they naturally go to other employments. But why the supply of labour in rural districts should continue to diminish it is not easy to understand, now that education facilities and the means of locomotion, and the distribution of the ordinary necessary articles of life are much easier in rural districts than they used to be. I do not believe, from what I have been told, nor from my own experience, that the housing question is really a very

efficient cause in this regard. I am glad, however, that that question of rural housing forms a part of the reference to a Select Committee in the House of Commons. My own belief is that it is far more a question of wages; and with the question of wages the question of poor relief undoubtedly is deeply connected. (Hear, hear.) It is pleasant to learn, as Mr Preston Thomas has informed me, that while the outdoor paupers in the South-Western District have diminished since January 1897 by nearly 10,000, the number of inmates of Workhouses has increased by only about 400. (Cheers.) In the attainment of this improvement I am sure that the unremitting exertions and wise advice, and the great personal influence of Mr Preston Thomas have had a large share. (Cheers.) He informs me that the diminution of out-relief has not been productive of hardship; but that the change is generally regarded as beneficial to the community—(cheers)—and that well-directed charity can be relied upon to provide, where it is necessary, for such persons as the Guardians do not consider to be proper recipients of out-relief. I think there can be no question that it is highly desirable that in rural districts there should be, in co-operation with the Guardians, some such system inaugurated as that of the Charity Organisation Society, the operations of which are of such incalculable benefit in many towns. It is sometimes sarcastically said that the Guardians consider themselves Guardians of the rates, rather than the Guardians of the poor, and no doubt it is true that in some matters, such as the provision of isolation hospitals, improvement of infirmaries, the increase and better remuneration of the staff, and other matters of that kind, which have to be supplied from the rates, a good deal of opposition has to be overcome. Probably with improvements in the condition of Workhouse infirmaries, and in the matter of the staff, considerable economy in the relief of the poor might be achieved; and such other economy might be secured as might render the increased burden on the rates less formidable than while the burden of the relief of the poor remains what it is, that burden must continue to appear. I have alluded to the position of infirmaries. I did so because I cannot help thinking that in view of the excellent organisation of nursing in rural districts, in which many of the leading ladies of our western counties are engaged, and in which they are met with very considerable appreciation and support by their neighbours, rich and poor—(cheers)—the infirmaries might be made useful training centres for their nurses, for whom there is a steadily growing demand. (Hear, hear.) If the infirmaries can be made, as they ought to be made, comfortable and not unattractive for the aged and sick poor, for whose comfort they might so largely provide, I believe that they would be by no means so undesirable a training ground for young nurses as they have hitherto been regarded, in which those nurses might begin their training. This struck me very strongly when I had the honour of opening a very efficient and well equipped new Exeter Infirmary. (Hear, hear.) I am glad to be able to

record that Plymouth has followed the example of Exeter, and provided another excellent infirmary. I am sorry that we should still have before us the problem of the treatment of the feeble-minded, both children and adults; I was greatly hoping that the Commission would have by this time reported, and have given a foundation for the much-needed legislation on the subject, for I feel convinced that a very great economy and an improved administration can be achieved by local authorities when they have more elastic powers for distribution, administration, and maintenance. (Cheers.) I mentioned also just now the subject of the increase of the staff; by that I meant specially to indicate the increase of the number and the pay of the relieving officers, because I believe that a sum much greater than the increase of expenditure so incurred would be saved by more rigid and constant inquiry into the conditions of the recipients of out-relief. I heard not long ago, with regret, in a half-yearly revision, the continuance of weekly doles of 1s. 6d.; I cannot but think that such doles are harmful rather than beneficial in the long run. (Cheers.) The system of which they are the result must tell in keeping down wages, and it is my firm belief that a higher rate of wages in rural districts would be remunerative to the employer. A farmer does not think nearly so seriously of the loss of a breeding ewe, which probably represents 50s. to him—(laughter)—as he does of an additional 1s. a week to a labourer. (Hear, hear.) If he loses a bullock, which may be worth perhaps £15, he is not nearly so alarmed as he would be at the idea of adding 1s. to the wages of three labourers; and it does not seem to occur to the employers that a family of a wife and five children cannot be healthily brought up on 12s. or 13s. a week, even with all the accessories, such as harvest money, potato ground, illegal allowance of drink, nominal rent of cottage, and so forth. It is far better for a man if he is receiving the value of 17s. or 18s. altogether that he should know it, for I believe that there is a serious loss of self-respect caused by the rural labourer considering his services to be valued at 12s. or 13s., forgetting all about his allowances, when he hears of the wage of 18s. or 20s. being received by a man who ought not at any rate to be considered at all superior to him. (Hear, hear.) It would not be well for me to forestall the subject of the papers which are to be read, but I think that the Conference will agree with me if I say that on the whole it would appear desirable if we could agree on some definite resolution as a step gained by means of our deliberations, and a purpose given to the members of the Conference when they disperse to their homes. (Cheers.) I am asked by the Standing Committee to say that it is contemplated that at the close of the second paper a resolution shall be drafted in the direction which is strongly advocated by the paper in connection with the establishment of some system of beneficial relief. (Cheers.)

Mr F. UNDERHILL read the following paper:—

THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE RATEPAYERS IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION.

By MR F. UNDERHILL,
Poor Law Guardian, Plymouth.

IN submitting this paper before an audience, a large number of whom are experts and authorities on Poor Law administration, I find myself in a somewhat difficult position, and the one hope of success which I have is that it will serve to promote a discussion which will achieve a real and practical result.

On reference to the Thirty-fourth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, which is the last published, I find in Table 98, pp. 460, 461, that for the past twenty-five years there has been an increase in the annual cost of Poor Law administration (with the exception of three years, 1886-7-9). In the year 1880 the total expenditure was £8,015,010, and in 1904 it is returned at £13,369,494, which shows that our annual expenditure in 1904 exceeded that of 1880 by £5,354,484; and under the several departments the excess was as follows:—

Department.	1880.	1904.	Increase.
	£	£	£
In-maintenance (including casual and vagrants) -	1,757,749	3,050,806	1,293,057
Out-relief - - - -	2,710,778	2,991,130	280,352
Maintenance of lunatics in county and borough asylums, registered hospitals, &c. - - -	994,204	2,286,652	1,292,448
Salaries and superannuation allowances - - -	1,053,218	2,358,851	1,305,633
Principals of loans repaid and interest on ditto -	319,426	1,098,163	778,737
Other expenses of or immediately connected with relief	1,179,635	1,583,892	404,257

It will thus be seen that there is a large increase in every department, especially under that of salaries and superannuations (which heads the list) and of indoor relief, hospitals, and asylums, the former of which is burdened with the "vagrancy costs," which, in my opinion, should not be charged under "Poor Law Relief Expenditure," but under that of the "Police."

The increase under "Indoor Relief" is accounted for by the additional comforts and improved dietary which the inmates of Workhouses now enjoy, viz., the new Dietary Order of 1900; the replacing of old and insanitary buildings by modern well-equipped and up-to-date establishments where the better and more humane treatment of our poor can be dealt with and the necessary classification carried out. Many towns and urban districts have still to face this question before they can at all be considered to be carrying out the Poor Law administration as it is needed to-day. I do not, however, think it desirable to offer the House too freely, and especially in temporary cases, as a person once having become an inmate of the Workhouse finds it more difficult to re-enter the world and work afresh, the temptation being great to remain in comparative idleness, and in all cases many old couples could live on together comfortably and keep out of the Workhouse if granted adequate out-relief. This would result in less real pauperism and economy in cost.

In considering the increase under "Asylums, Hospitals, &c.," we shall find that the building of so many large establishments throughout the country providing improved accommodation and facilities for dealing with the sick and infirm justifies the increase, and I am certain that no ratepayer in the country will object to this increased expenditure or consider it burdensome, so long as they are convinced that the money is being used to the best advantage for the better comfort of the imbecile, the infirm, and the sick and needy.

The increase under salaries and superannuations, loans, &c., is only on a par with the spirit of the times, and when we read and remember the old days of "Bumbledom," corrupt officialism, and compare it with our present officers and Poor Law inspectors and the manner in which our work is now carried out, we can only describe it as "worth the money." Salaries in every profession and trade are showing considerable increases and can only be taken as a symptom of the age and a proof of the better class of officer universally demanded.

Less increase in expenditure occurs under "Out-relief" than in other departments, largely, no doubt, due to the constant advice of our district Poor Law inspectors and also of many Boards of Guardians who are now exercising greater care and judgment in the appointment of capable and zealous relieving officers. In my opinion this department will play a most prominent part in the future for properly dealing with the aged and deserving poor. In many instances it would be true economy for Boards of Guardians to appoint additional relieving officers and collectors. Is not offering of an applicant the House as a test of destitution frequently a confession from the relieving officer that he does not know his case? and is it not often taken advantage of by Boards of Guardians to dispose of or hear the last of a troublesome applicant? Hardships must in many cases follow decisions thus arrived at. On the other hand, if the officer had sufficient time to thoroughly investigate a case and found it undeserving, then he should recommend that "relief be not granted," or, if deserving, that "relief be granted." Relieving officers should have not only sufficient but ample time to thoroughly investigate all applications for relief before placing the same before their respective Boards, as such investigations must result in the proper relief being granted, the detection of fraud and try-on cases, and to an economical result for the ratepayer.

Taking several of the large cities and towns, it will be found that although the expenditure has in all cases increased considerably, yet there has not been a corresponding increase in the poor rate, owing to the advance and prosperity in the rateable value of all large centres and manufacturing districts. In rural districts the expenditure and amount of the poor rate has in many cases decreased, so that it will not be possible for me to maintain that there is an increasing financial burden upon the ratepayers; and I shall venture to say that the bulk of the ratepayers do not consider the burden from the amount of the cost, but from the knowledge that our "present Poor Law system" is one of "toleration rather than cure and remedy." It is the exception to-day to take up a newspaper or magazine and not find in it some scathing remarks or urgent appeals for the reform of our "Poor Law system." Mr A. Holden Byles, in a recent lecture on "Poverty," says—"The English Poor Law system was almost the worst in the world"; and we also read that Professor Masterman, Mrs Higgs, and many others who are studying this difficult problem, have been speaking some very necessary truths at the expense of the present system. And rightly so, in my opinion, as I am certain that the burden will be more keenly felt and realised as time goes on, the problem of Poor Law administration more difficult to contend with; in fact, unless the Poor Law authorities and our legislators bring in some effective measures of "social reform," I can see nothing but a still further increasing burden and pauperism of the people, and here I am reminded of the words of G. P. Gooch in "The Heart of the Empire":—

"To-day the hope of progress at home and tranquillity abroad lies in the recognition, in theory and practice, of the supreme claim of the moral ideal, not less in our dealings with our dependencies and with other nations than in the social transformation through

which England must pass in her progress towards a healthier and happier life."

Yes, it is social transformation that is needed, and to effect a real economy in our "Poor Law system" is not merely the saving of expense, but the saving of the material which will be required to carry on the work of our Empire.

It has already been publicly said that the Commission now sitting will advise that "Boards of Guardians" shall cease to exist, and that the work shall be carried on by the county councils, thus bringing this vast department under one head with other county, municipal, and educational work; but from what I know of public work, and of the share which falls to the "Poor Law Guardian," I am convinced that the county councils could not efficiently carry on this additional work, unless their numbers were materially strengthened, and even then I fear the work would simply and rapidly converge into the hands of officials, and if that is so, it will be far better to keep the administration separate. The work of a county councillor is heavy enough at present, with the large schemes and increasing expenditure in all departments, the carrying out of extensive municipal concerns, drainage, sanitation, and educational work; but the work of a Poor Law Guardian differs from all this. They have to deal with "the people themselves," with the troubles and misfortunes of "fellowmen and women"; they often constitute the peacemaker between families in dispute, and have to enter and inquire into private and domestic matters. Boards of Guardians are, or should be, in daily touch with the unemployed, the sick, and the poor; and in my opinion it would be wiser and more economical to strengthen the power of Guardians, and I am also of opinion that a more liberal supply of ladies, willing to take up and enter into this work, would be beneficial to the country.

Have Boards of Guardians sufficient scope for their energy and ideas of social progress? Are they encouraged to promote and carry out economical reforms that are sorely needed? I answer No, they are not; they are hampered and hindered by the slow and antiquated regulations of the present Poor Law system. Let us take two or three instances. A deserted woman applies for relief, who has several children, and we are instructed that we cannot give them out-relief, but that they must come into the House.

We are dissatisfied with an officer, either because he is inefficient, dishonest, or incapable, and we have to report the matter to the Local Government Board, who send down an inspector, and the result frequently upsets the firm conviction of a large body of Guardians, and we are unable to discharge the officer in question.

We have an application from a man and his wife for discharge from the House, and we are instructed that unless they take their children with them we cannot grant it, or in other words, that they cannot leave without their children, and knowing that these children are returning to a den of infamy and will probably come back to our care in a worse condition than we first found them in, yet we are instructed under the present system to suggest this course to these irresponsible people.

Only a few weeks since, at a meeting of the Board of which I am a member, the case of a young man (23), with a wife and three children, came up. He was getting relief with labour in the stoneyard, 9s. per week, and applied for a pair of boots. It was found on inquiry that he had left the navy, where he had been getting 18s. per week, for work as a labourer at 24s. per week on other Government works under a contractor; when this job was completed, he was unable to get other work and therefore had to apply for relief. The only course the Guardians had was to offer him

the stoneyard, where there is little doubt but that he will drift into a prematurely old man, a pauper, and unable to carry on his natural purpose in life. The position was described by a Guardian "as a blot on the Poor Law administration of this country, that the Guardians had not the power to offer this applicant more encouraging work." As regards the request for "boots" they were not granted. I might quote many such cases, but desire only to lay before you the necessity of stirring up the Local Government Board and Parliament to the need of "Poor Law reform," which must naturally mean economy and a lessening of the burden on the ratepayers.

The Distress Act of 1905 was a tardy recognition that something was wrong, and the taking of the working of that Act out of the hands of Poor Law Guardians was an error of judgment; but from what I can see Poor Law Guardians are to be made the scapegoats of the deadlock in which we find ourselves. For many years our legislators have put aside domestic matters until at last the problem of real economy in Poor Law administration claims attention, and the ratepayer who pays "demands to call the tune."

There is no doubt in my mind, that to effect economy in our Poor Law system, and to lessen the moral burden now imposed on the ratepayers, must mean looking ahead, preparing and improving the class of individual who will be responsible for the future working and welfare of our country. The problem of "Old Age pensions" is a pressing one, and when solved will materially affect and minimise "Poor Law relief." Any man who has been honest and industrious during his working lifetime should be entitled to at least 5s. per week from the State.

Under the present system there is little doubt but that large numbers of the vicious and criminal classes are finding shelter under and imposing upon our Poor

Law authorities. This is deplorable, and immediate action should be taken to bring this class under the care of the police, or that they shall be placed in establishments where they will be made to work, for whilst I boldly say that no man or woman who wants work and is willing to work should be unable to get it, yet I even more boldly assert that the man or woman who will not work should be compelled to do so.

The present conditions under which the poor live are largely responsible for the supply of paupers, and the huddling together of these poor people in badly ventilated, insanitary buildings, and often at excessive rents, must have only one result, namely, the production of children mentally and physically unfit to earn their living, or to be equal to the strain and stress of the present conditions of life. The better housing of the poor is one of the first steps that should be taken in a much needed reform, and the result of such action must be the curtailing of, and eventually stopping the now rapid supply of weaklings and imbeciles. Of the latter the Reports of the Lunacy Commissioners recently published are showing an alarming increase in the number of cases under treatment, and must convince all who study or take part in public work and the welfare of our country, that this branch of Poor Law administration and its causes call for immediate attention.

Then as to the children so often now described as "the children of the State," who wander about our towns and cities, no doubt wondering why they are in such different circumstances to the luckier ones they see around them. Too great a power cannot be given to Boards of Guardians and charitable institutions in reclaiming them, and no expense with such an object in view can be termed an extravagance. At present they are born in misery, grow up as criminals, tramps, and dissolute persons. On the other hand, better their lot, educate and train them to trades, and the

supply of this undesirable class must diminish, and a healthier and more economical position be founded. Boards of Guardians should have greater power in the removal of the children from dissolute and criminal parents, and the punishment of the offenders should be in the hands of the magistrate and also should "befit the crime."

I have endeavoured in the space and time at my disposal to show what, in my opinion, is the increasing burden on ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration, and I do not see how, under the present system, that it will be possible to carry out any real economy or to lighten the existing burden, as all the prominent questions of the day, such as Unemployment, Vagrancy, Housing of the Poor, the Feeding and Education of Children, and other social problems, rely upon a perfect and searching system of Poor Law administration.

I consider that "Boards of Guardians" should have control and management of all municipal labour registries and bureaux, so that they will be in direct touch with employers of labour, and able to give applicants for work proper and suitable employment in place of the "stoneyard." Greater encouragement should be given them, and power to subscribe to and help all deserving and charitable institutions which have for their object provision for old age, temperance, thrift, prevention of cruelty to the young, and cure of illness and disease.

It may be considered by many that this programme will necessitate large expenditure, but I shall contend that it is real economy and will have the effect of lessening pauperism and bringing about a healthier and more provident condition among the people.

It is for a Conference such as this to take action should they think fit on any suggestions that I may have expressed in my paper, and I am hopeful that a resolution will be forthcoming which will set your

Committee to work and to make some practical representations to the authorities and Parliament for reform on the many serious problems existing to-day, and which may correctly be termed "The increasing burden on the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration."

Mr A. G. FERRERS HOWELL, Hon. Secretary, read the following paper by the Rev. L. R. Phelps:—

THE INCREASING BURDEN ON THE RATEPAYERS IN CONNECTION WITH POOR LAW ADMINISTRATION.

BY REV. L. R. PHELPS,
Vice-Chairman, Oxford Incorporation.

THE question of Poor Law expenditure is much to the fore at the present time. Figures are quoted in plenty to support the statement that an increase is general and progressive. I shall not, in this paper, attempt to answer some questions raised by the figures, *e.g.*, how far has the general rise in the standard of living made a rise in the standard of administration inevitable? and whether the difference between the provision now made for the poor and their normal condition is greater or less than it was, or whether we are, as the phrase runs, "getting value for our money." Nor shall I dwell on the obvious economy of careful administration whether of indoor or outdoor relief, but I shall deal with some more general considerations.

The present generation owes a vast deal of good and some ill to the division of labour, and first and foremost the greater cheapness of commodities. Specialisation in industry and classification of labourers have not merely inspired eloquent paragraphs in the writings of economists, but have produced tangible results in the wider range which they have opened to

all consumers. It is a question worth asking, whether we have made the most of this principle in our dealings with pauperism and poverty, and whether the same results might not be expected to follow from its application to this field. To put it in another way. We put under the head of pauperism, and treat under the Poor Law, whole classes of cases which might be treated more efficiently, and therefore more economically, if treated from a different point of view.

A. B. falls down in a fit in the streets of one of our large towns. What is done with him? He is picked up by the police and he may be taken (1) to an hospital "supported by voluntary contributions," (2) to the Workhouse infirmary, or (3) if there is a suspicion of contagious sickness, to the infectious diseases hospital, maintained by the Corporation as sanitary authority. I have lately made careful inquiries into the point, and I find that his destination depends on local circumstances. Now I pass over some incidental results of this variety of treatment, as that in one case he probably ceases to be a citizen in the active sense, that he is sometimes called upon to pay for his treatment and sometimes not; these are important points, but outside our immediate subject.

The main point on which I wish to insist is that in the case of medical aid, when given in an institution, there is great overlapping, a multiplication of administrative and curative agencies, and a consequent waste; and in our case, as Poor Law Guardians, it is a matter of modern growth. The old Workhouse infirmary was intended for those inmates of the Workhouse who required institutional treatment. It never entered the heads of those who planned it that patients would be brought into it without passing through the Workhouse at all, sometimes without even an order from the relieving officer.

The present system has led to two results, both costly. First, to a competition between Workhouse

infirmaries and hospitals, the source of extravagance in building and management; and secondly, to an increase in the number of indoor poor. Many of those who are brought into an infirmary are passed for the time of convalescence into the body of the house, and never leave it. Whereas, but for their unconscious introduction they would possibly not have come on the Poor Law at all. Is there any remedy? I would suggest a drastic treatment. Put all institutions on the same footing, make them all State hospitals. Deal with the question from the point of view of health not of poverty. If a man is ill enough to require treatment in an institution, our only interest, as a community, is to get him well as soon as may be, as General Booth puts it: "When the horse is down, the great thing is to get him up." Make all institutions State hospitals, do not pauperise or disfranchise any one for going into them, give the managers ample powers of recovery against all who are able to pay for their treatment, and abolish all outdoor medical relief. A man may fairly be asked to make provision against the ordinary "ills to which flesh is heir," he cannot be expected, in all cases, to pay for an operation for appendicitis. So make the test of admission severity of disease not poverty. The gain, I am convinced, would be enormous. Efficiency would be greater, and restoration to health speedier. The amalgamation of institutions would greatly reduce the cost of maintenance. The abolition of outdoor medical relief would strengthen clubs everywhere, encourage providence, and stop at its first beginning a vast amount of dependence on the rates.

Take another question, which may be treated on the same lines.

We need some division of the labour of relieving between Poor Law and Charity. As it is, each of the two is constantly doing the work of the other. Charity insists on helping tramps, and so swelling

that great army. Poor Law will attempt the relief of persons who really need individual assistance and moral support far more than money, and the list might easily be lengthened. The result is that a vast amount of money and of effort is squandered. Money is given away in doles, instead of being concentrated, and its usefulness is proportionately diminished. Effort is ill directed, and men and women take shelter with pauperism, and children grow up under its baneful shadow—who might have been saved from it by a different treatment at an early stage. Here surely there is a great field in which to practise our principle. Just as the medical work of a town or district is all one, and should be treated as a whole, so too is the charitable. There are many agencies, the Poor Law amongst them, but their aim and object is the same—to divide out the field between them would be to increase efficiency and to save expense. Two conditions must be present. First, a good understanding between Guardians and the charitable; and secondly, which is far harder of attainment, a good understanding and a loyal co-operation among the charitable themselves. If only we could concentrate charitable funds, and apply them wisely, half our work as Guardians would be gone. As it is, the confusion is endless. Cities with large charitable endowments, instead of being able to provide for their outdoor poor without coming on the rates, have often a number above the average. Parochial charities, owing to movements of population, are wholly disproportionate and intensify the housing difficulty. Individuals give alms in total ignorance of the action of others, clergy and others act independently and on principles of their own. Now, if some co-operation could be established between all these various helpers of the poor, our work as Guardians would be lightened, and our expenditure reduced; and which is, from the public point of view, infinitely more important, the

assistance given them not as relief dealt out grudgingly in accordance with law, but as an evidence of the sympathy existing between classes.

Let me further meet a possible objection. It is sometimes said that under this system the duty of relieving the poor is transferred from the whole community to the charitable few. The fact, no doubt, is so, but is it matter for regret? The compulsory nature of Poor Law help is an evil in itself; well-directed private charity is on every ground more satisfactory than a tax on unwilling ratepayers. We do not find any great difficulty in raising subscriptions. We have never had to refuse a case owing to want of funds; the charitable welcome a well-considered and useful application of their gifts. It is the uncertainty whether their money will be wasted or not which stays the hand of so many charitable people.

It will be observed that my experience is confined to a town, and to a town which in the past was almost a proverb for the weakness of prudential forces. What has been done in Oxford can, I am sure, *a fortiori* be done elsewhere. The application of the principle to country districts must be a matter of consideration and discussion. The difficulties are obvious, but I hope that the Conference will bring out suggestions, and possibly experiences.

And now to diverge into a larger question and of a different kind. The Act of 1895 profoundly modified the constitution of Boards of Guardians. The old system, by which under what is known as Sturges Brown's Act, gave votes in proportion to rating, and fixed a fairly high qualification for Guardians. Both these have been swept away, and one result has been to weaken responsibility in expenditure. I cannot but think that the change has made it more imperative than ever that every elector should pay his own rates directly. As matters stand, composition is common in town, and in the country the great majority of labourers

do not pay their own rates either on their houses or their allotments. If they did so, the incentive to economical administration would be much stronger than it is. I need not dwell on the political advantages which would follow on a more lively sense of citizenship and its duties. Is it impossible to bring this about? Administrative difficulties are commonly urged, but if the owners of cottage property find it possible to get their rents collected for 5 per cent. on the sum collected, surely it cannot be beyond the wit of man to devise some means by which rates could be treated in the same way.

But it would take us too far if we went into all the various possibilities which our subject suggests. I will end as I began by saying that the remedy for growing expenditure is largely in the hands of Guardians themselves. Careful and thorough inquiry in the case of outdoor relief, a code of rules consistently followed, a loyal support given to relieving officers, will do much. Economy in building and furnishing of the right kind, carefulness in management of institutions, and I would say last, but not least, a scale of salaries which will secure efficiency—these are all commonplace recommendations, but, perhaps, not the less valuable on that account.

DISCUSSION.

Rev. J. GAMBLE (Bristol) said he had been asked to intervene in that discussion, not because he was now, or ever had been, a member of a Board of Guardians, but because he had been intimately associated for a considerable number of years with the relief work of the Charity Organisation Society of Bristol, and it was from the point of view of a member of that society that he should venture to make a few observations to them upon the lucid paper to which they had just listened. They would have observed that the contention of the writer of the paper was that the Poor Law would be more effectively, and, at the same time, economically administered if many cases which it now dealt with could be transferred to other agencies. With the first instance of such delegation which the writer gave, and

which would involve the establishment of State hospitals, he did not feel competent to deal, and he would at once pass to his second instance, involving the establishment of charitable relief committees. Mr Phelps warmly supported co-operation between Guardians and charity organisation societies; pointing to Oxford, where the number of paupers had been reduced from 1 in 23 in 1870, to 1 in 53 in 1906, as affording an example of the benefits arising from co-operation. His own experience had been gained in a city where this co-operation was not by any means so complete as they could wish it to be, but at the same time it pointed with much clearness and decision towards the same conclusion which Mr Phelps had reached. (Cheers.) Every one who had ever attempted to deal with the evils of poverty had felt the necessity of discrimination, of not attempting to deal with men in groups, but splitting up all groups into independent units, and dealing with each of the units separately, of taking even each member of a family and dealing with that member separately and apart from the rest. Let them take the most hopeless of all cases, those of chronic poverty. A married man had, let them say, seven or eight children. At the best of times, and while he was able to work, he earned barely enough to support his family, saving was out of the question; he was overtaken by sickness, and he at once crossed the line which separated the dependent from the independent; he applied for outdoor relief, but it was quite impossible for the most lavish Board of Guardians to give anything like as much relief as was really needed. Little as the relief given in such a case might amount to, it was perhaps enough to keep the wolf from the door; the family, by the aid of kind neighbours and credit, struggled on, and it might be several years before the final catastrophe came, and every member of the family incurred the stigma of pauperism. But in the meantime during those years what a scandal to their civilisation was such a household. The inmates had not proper food, and they had a poor chance of resisting any disease which might be prevalent; the children might indeed be sent to school, but how could they expect children fed as those children were fed to learn? Now perhaps it might be urged that the real evil was that wages were so low, and this might be true, but he was dealing with industrial conditions as they at present existed, and he would urge that such cases would be far better dealt with if they were handed over by the Guardians in some such way as the writer described to a charitable committee. At present these cases fell, so to speak, between two stools, the Guardians could not deal with them properly, and the Charity Organisation Society made it a principle, a sound principle, as he believed, not to undertake to deal with any case which was the property of the Poor Law. If such cases were referred to a charitable relief committee what could be done? Two or even three of the children might be provided for in Homes, and thus the normal expenditure brought more within the compass of the earnings. The

help given in sickness might be really sufficient, perhaps a more economical way of living might be suggested. (Hear, hear.) Look again at those very numerous cases where what was really needed was a loan, or some initial expenditure of money on a considerable scale. A widow found herself unable to support her children. The Poor Law could only give her a weekly allowance, but a charitable committee might take that widow and train her, let them say, as a weekly nurse—many such cases were known to him—or by some expenditure a committee might put her into a position of independence. The establishment of such committees in towns presented little difficulty. Where a charity organisation society existed its committees might be used. He was quite aware that the name-Charity Organisation had an evil sound in the ears perhaps of many who were listening to him. If he had the time and the opportunity he thought he could show that the Society did not deserve its evil reputation, but that the principles upon which it acted were those which experience imperatively prescribed. (Cheers.) In any case, when a committee was established it should be clearly understood that it aimed at dealing thoroughly with every case of poverty that it took up, and that it would not be content with merely touching the symptoms without endeavouring to reach the cause of the distress. (Cheers.)

Mr J. G. PERRETT (Westbury and Whorwellsdown) thought the papers which had been read, and the discussion, would be very helpful to them as Guardians. The country representatives and agriculturists very often felt the increased burden of the rates very much, and if anything could be suggested there that day whereby they might be checked—he did not anticipate any lessening of the rates—but if anything could be suggested by which they were checked, they would obtain a very great advantage. (Hear, hear.) They had had the Mayor of Bath drawing their attention to the fact that the cost of children in the Cottage Homes was 6s. 9d. each per week. They ought, he thought, to impress upon parents the duty of providing for their own children. (Cheers.) What they should principally do as Guardians or as members of that Poor Law Conference was, in his humble opinion, to inculcate thrift into the people—to look after their own children was, in his humble opinion, the first duty of men and women. (Cheers.) If through any misfortune to parents children were thrown upon charity of any description, whether the Poor Law or other charitable organisations, he did not believe that they could possibly do too much for those children—(cheers)—but if they were going to advocate the taking away of children from natural parents—and a good many of them unnatural parents—(laughter)—and provide for them, it would only induce those parents to get more children for them to do the same thing with. (Laughter and cheers.) He repeated that the great thing was to inculcate thrift into parents. Sir Thomas Acland, their Chairman, said the great thing would be for the agri-

culturists to give more wages. If Sir Thomas could tell them how they could give labourers more wages with wheat selling at from 12s. to 13s. a sack, he should be glad to hear it. (Cheers.) With the continuation of their present system of Free Trade, or free imports rather, their labourers would have to learn the lesson of taking the same rate of wages as the foreign labourer who competed with him. (Hear, hear, and cheers.) That was the cause, in his humble opinion, of a great deal of the migration into the towns from the country. That caused a great deal of unemployment in the towns, and then they had a great many people going about the country asking for employment in the earnest hope that they would not find it. (Laughter and cheers.) His experience was that once a man had taken to the road he was no good to employers whatever. (Hear, hear.) The question was, "What is to be done with him?" He heartily approved of the suggestion made by Mr Phelps that every cottager should pay his own rates. He believed if that were done they would be getting at the foundation of the whole thing. (Hear, hear.) Since the labourer had had the extended franchise he had had the same voice in the election of Parish Council, District Council, and all the rest of it as the owner. He thought it was one of the greatest mistakes that could possibly be made for the owner to compound the rates. What they should do was, if possible, to get rid of compounding of rates, whereby every man should pay his own rates—(cheers)—reduce his rent if they liked, supposing it was £5 a year, reduce it to £4, but compel him to pay his own rates. He would then have an interest in keeping down the rates. (Cheers.)

Mrs COODE (Wells) was afraid that what she was going to say would be extremely unpopular. She had indeed been wondering whether she had better say it at all. (Laughter.) Her only excuse was that she spoke as a Guardian to fellow-Guardians, and therefore she included herself. She noticed in Mr Phelps's paper that he spoke about the constitution of Boards of Guardians. Her personal view was that the cause of a good deal of the mischief which went on still in the Poor Law was the way the Guardians themselves were elected. She did not know whether anybody would agree with her, but she thought that the first thing they wanted was for the electors themselves to take a greater interest in the election of the Boards. (Hear, hear.) It seemed to her where she had been, and from what she had seen, that the electors were quite apathetic as regarded who was elected, or why they were elected, or anything about it. The first thing that she would like to see done away with was any sort of canvassing. She did not know whether it was possible in this world, but at the same time she did think that canvassing ought to act as a disqualification if it could be found out. (Cheers.) She knew that it was very difficult to find it out. (Laughter.) Then she thought that treating ought to be done away with, and she knew that it existed in extraordinary ways. She had suffered very much in con-

tested elections from the practice. Another thing which she thought would be very wise, would be for all of them in putting out any manifesto as to what they promised or hoped to do, to be very careful to speak the truth. (Loud laughter.) It seemed to be the last thing generally spoken. She thought if people would just issue an address in the newspapers and leave it to the electors, if they thought they were worth anything they would be elected, if not, they had better not be on the Board. As regarded the qualifications of the Guardians the electors should in the first place seek for character in the people they selected to represent them. There was so much cliquism on different Boards throughout the country, so much political feeling, that it entirely spoiled the whole object of a Board of Guardians. Her theory was that they all ought to work together for the individual good, and not for any party or for popularity—(cheers)—popularity was, she feared, a great snare for all of them. Then she thought that they should have some knowledge of the Poor Law, therefore she quite felt that she should be the first to come out. (Laughter.) Nevertheless, she had this advantage, that she knew there were a great number of Guardians who knew even less than she did. (Renewed laughter.) She regretted that the contents of newspapers were so much appreciated by members during the progress of meetings. (Laughter.) There were some Guardians who read newspapers during the whole time the Board was sitting, and she felt that they might as well read them at home. (Hear, hear.) She was afraid that they would think her nothing but a grumbler, but she thought it would be helpful if they tried to learn more of Poor Law duties. (Cheers.)

Mr H. HAYNES LOVELL (Axminster) agreed with the previous speaker as to the ignorance and indifference of many Guardians. Poor Law work was about the only thing a man undertook to do which he knew nothing at all about. (Laughter.) It was dreadful, he knew, but they were all Guardians talking to themselves, even if they were talking to the world through the Press. He had not been a Guardian very long, but he had taken a practical interest in Poor Law work for fifteen years, and he had learned a great deal at these Conferences. How many neglected the opportunity of attending the Conference, and of thereby increasing their knowledge of Poor Law work. In one county one-quarter of the Boards had not sent delegates, and in another county nearly one-half had not sent delegates. He presumed that they knew all about Poor Law. (Laughter.) They did not want to learn. He gave details of the number of Boards of Guardians in each county, and of the number represented at the Conference, and urged that they must endeavour to get Boards of Guardians to take a greater interest in the work. One way in which this could be done was by inducing more Boards to send delegates to these Conferences. (Cheers.)

Miss NORAH L. FRY (Cricket St Thomas) said she could not claim to speak as a Guardian, and for that reason she would confine

herself to the paper by Mr Phelps, and to the discussion which had taken place upon it. She spoke of the difficulty of forming charity organisation committees in country districts; and expressed the hope that each Board of Guardians would form the nucleus of a committee for each particular Union. Her view was that the most experienced Guardians should co-opt other members from outside the Board who had had experience of work amongst the poor. If any of these people could give up two or three weeks or more to learning a little more about the Poor Law they would be far more fitted for this particular work. She said without hesitation that such training could be best got working under a charity organisation committee in London. Although the conditions in towns were quite different to those in the country the broad principles were the same, and it would be for those trained workers to work out the problems of the towns in the country. She hoped that in every Union there would be at least one person forthcoming who would go and spend at least a few weeks at a charity organisation committee, and she was quite certain that such a person would come away overwhelmed with a sense of his own ignorance, and at the same time a great deal wiser than when he went. (Laughter.) She did not mean to say that they should start charity organisation committees—that she did not think was contemplated, but charitable relief committees, which worked on those lines, and at the outset worked in conjunction with the Guardians. Many committees, unhappily for them and for the Guardians, did not co-operate in their work as they should. (Hear, hear.) She should like to see the initiative come from such a Conference as that, in order that each Board of Guardians might take it up. There would be a great many difficulties to be overcome, not the least being the distances in country districts, and the lack of organisation, but it might, she thought, be effected. The speaker concluded by reading a number of typical cases in which Boards of Guardians and outside relief committees might, she urged, profitably co-operate.

The PRESIDENT intimated that so many delegates had signified their wish to speak that five minutes only could be allocated to each speaker.

Mr J. J. SMETH (Stratton) said the subject which had been so ably dealt with in the two papers to which they had listened was a subject which concerned not only the Guardians but the ratepayers at large. "When will the increasing burdens on the ratepayers in connection with the Poor Law administration cease?" was a question which had been asked again and again, and his answer had always been, "When Boards of Guardians are not hampered and hindered by the slow and antiquated system and by the red-tapeism of the Local Government Board." (Loud cheers.) So long as these things continued, so long might they expect an ever-increasing burden on the ratepayers. (Hear, hear.) The Guardians had not a minimum much less a maximum of control of expenditure. In the

county of Cornwall, from which he came—and he was proud that that county of Cornwall, though at the far end of the District, was better represented than all the counties of the District—(cheers)—they knew their ignorance—(laughter and cheers)—and he would like to say that they had come there to learn, and he hoped they would go back better men than when they came—(cheers)—in the county of Cornwall the county rate amounted to 1s. 8d. in the £, the actual poor rate amounted to 1s. 3d., so that the actual rate over which the Guardians had only a semi-control was 1s. 3d. out of a possible 2s. 11d. Mr Underhill, in the statistics which he gave them, said there was a large increase in every department, especially in salaries and superannuation. In 1880 it amounted to £1,053,218, and in 1904 to £2,358,851, so that in twenty-four years this large expenditure had been more than doubled. In this case also the Guardians had no control whatever. It was the highly paid officials, with their superannuation at the close, over which they as Guardians had little or no control, that were answerable for at least part of this ever-increasing burden on the ratepayers. The salaries and superannuation allowance in 1894 amounted to almost as much as the out-relief, or, to be correct, it was only £63,279 less than the out-relief as given that day by Mr Underhill. The only thing over which they as Guardians had any authority was the upkeep of the Workhouse. Guardians must act on cast-iron rules, but if a Board of Guardians did not know their own requirements better than a Board in London so much the worse for the districts. (Cheers.)

Mr E. B. WETHERED (Local Government Board) said the question brought before them in the papers was a very important and practical one, but he had not heard a great deal as to the direction in which this reduction was to be effected. He had no time in the space of five minutes to deal with it, but he would simply say this that the basis they had to look for was to find out and deal with those causes which produced pauperism. (Hear, hear.) Until they could grapple with the causes they could not very well understand where they were to bring any economy in it. There were a great many subjects put down to Poor Law which had nothing whatever to do with Poor Law. Further, he was disposed to think that at any rate in the country districts, generally speaking, there had not been any very serious increase for many years. He thought that the increased cost of administration in the Workhouse—he was dealing with the provinces and not with London—could be to a great extent, if not entirely, justified. One of the causes was that they had now so few able-bodied men in Workhouses; the class of people now entering the Workhouse was chiefly the old, the infirm, and the sick, who required looking after. If they looked to the returns, in some of them they would find a large number of able-bodied; that was no fault of the statistical department, but it was extremely misleading. He thought that the returns in his district, as far as his memory

served him, pointed to between 6,000 and 7,000 able-bodied men in the Workhouses, whereas there were only 216 out of that large number mentally and physically capable of getting a living outside. In the returns made at the present time men mentally defective, blind, men who had lost one leg, were returned as able-bodied men. It was, no doubt, quite right to put these people upon the diet for the able-bodied, but they were not able-bodied people. (Hear, hear.) They had more of the old and infirm in the Workhouses than heretofore. There had been, too, a considerable increase in the cost of nursing, but he did not think that the public would complain of that. (Hear, hear.) There used to be a great deal of pauper nursing. In his district alone in 1899 there were 312 pauper assistants, but, mainly owing to the fact that there were so few able-bodied people in the Workhouse, this number had been reduced to 175 pauper assistants, whilst the number of day nurses had increased from 132 in 1899 to 203; but, what was still more important, night nurses had increased from 43 to 82. (Cheers.) This was, no doubt, to a certain extent due to a greater appreciation on the part of the Guardians of the necessity of having more nurses, but the decrease in pauper assistants was very largely due to the fact that Guardians had no able-bodied people whom they could trust with the work. There were less inducements now than there were to able-bodied to go into the Workhouses, and nothing had tended to that so much as the Act of 1900, which did away with the beer. (Cheers.)

Rev. Canon PURCELL (St Austell) said he was there rather to make a protest than to make a speech. "The increasing burden on the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration" was their subject, and one of the papers was written by the Rev. L. R. Phelps, whom he had the pleasure of knowing slightly, and who was on the Royal Commission. He could only hope that the Royal Commission would find some more practical way of reducing the burden on the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration than one of those which had been suggested by Mr Phelps, and which had not yet been touched upon. When he received Mr Phelps's paper at his own home, and read it, he was rather thunderstruck with the suggestion it contained to "put all institutions on the same footing; make them all State hospitals." In effect he supposed that they were to do away with their great institutions throughout the land which called forth the charitable feelings of people, and put them on a dead level and make the ratepayers pay for them. Well, he for one protested against that altogether. (Cheers.) In the first place, he knew very well that it would mean an enormous increase in the rates. (Hear, hear.) It was so drastic as to be perfectly impossible; it was chimerical. (Cheers.) It would be a revolution if they had rate-supported hospitals, and then they were to recover from any of those who had been inmates and who were in a position to pay them back! (Laughter.) He fancied himself that one's experience of giving relief on loan was not encouraging to this.

How often had they done it with completely satisfactory results? He did not think that one need enter into that matter very seriously; but he wanted to make a protest, and he asked whether they could in any way formulate a resolution, or send their ideas as a Conference to headquarters, with regard to the way in which the increases in their rating were made by that eminently respectable body, the Local Government Board. (Cheers.) He dared say they all knew that there had lately been issued to Boards of Guardians by the Local Government Board rather a sinister document asking for all manner of information in view of the Royal Commission. He was one of those who would like to see a great deal of their Poor Law administration improved off the face of the earth—(cheers)—and he did not see why they should be called upon to furnish such tremendous details as were asked for in such returns as that referred to, and to pay for them. (Hear, hear.) In the return just asked for they were to give not only the names of the paupers but information as to why each individual had become chargeable, and a mass of other details which would involve an enormous amount of work, and extra remuneration would have to be given. All that he knew was that the Clerk to their own Board was one who would expect extra pay. He certainly thought that the time had arrived when they should make a protest.

Mr R. F. BREALY (Okehampton) said he did not know how many years he had represented his Board at that Conference, but he had never known it as lively as it was that day. (Laughter). Never had he seen people so anxious to speak. He knew that it was a subject upon which every man and woman had a grievance, and possibly a theory, but upon which no man or woman had a conscience. (Oh, and laughter.) He had been nearly twenty years upon an assessment committee and only once did he remember anyone asking that the rates should be put up, and that, to the credit of the Church of England, was by a Church of England parson. (Laughter.) He came and said, "I insist upon being put up, because I have only paid so much." (Laughter.) He was one of those who differed entirely from the heading of the paper. It was absolutely, in his opinion, untrue to say that there was an "increasing burden" upon the ratepayers, and he stood there to say that there was no blame, or very little at least, to be put upon the shoulders of the poor. That there was something wrong he was willing to admit. It took £27 a year to keep a person in the Workhouse; for a family of five that was 50s. a week. There was something radically wrong in that, and it was for them to find out where the wrong was. The Guardians were as keen as mustard upon every farthing spent, and he did not think that they ought to let the Press or anybody else put the blame upon them.

Mr W. H. HEATH (Newton-Abbot) said if they wanted to stem pauperism they must help those who helped themselves. (Cheers.) Those who were members of friendly societies should have every

consideration. (Hear, hear.) He knew several who had let themselves out of clubs because they got more from the Poor Law than from clubs. Men said, "You are fools to join the club when you can have more money from the Poor Law." Somebody said "more ladies," but he did not think they wanted more ladies in Poor Law work. They did not know the earning of money—(laughter)—at any rate a lot of them did not, but they knew how to spend it freely. (Renewed laughter.) Then they got a lot of parsons on the Boards; they were sentimental, they gave it away. The ladies and the parsons would do very well as visitors, but not as administrators. (Laughter and cheers.)

Mr J. WYATT (Cerne) remarked that the best way, and indeed the only way, as far as he could see, to keep down Poor Law expenses was to encourage all young people to join friendly societies such as the Foresters and the Oddfellows. When once they had taken it up he thought that they would do anything they possibly could to keep in. He wished all Guardians would try to induce young men to join these clubs, not dividing clubs, but such old-established societies as those he mentioned. This would do more to create independence among the working classes than all the talk there that day.

Mr R. BRUFORD (Taunton) emphasised the necessity of Boards of Guardians carefully discriminating between the deserving and the undeserving poor. This was what they had been doing in the Taunton Union for some years. In 1880 the total cost of relief in his Union was £12,131; to-day, £9,743 was spent. (Cheers.) That was a decrease of 36 per cent., whereas for the whole country the cost during the same period showed an increase of 55 per cent. Mr Preston Thomas, who was present, knew the Taunton district very well, and he could tell them that they had no case of hardship so far as he knew. (Hear, hear.) He thought that if Guardians would not allow their sympathies to run away with them they would not hear so much about increased rates. As to the agricultural labourers' wages being 12s. or 13s. a week, the rate in the neighbourhood of Taunton would be found to be nearer 17s. (Cheers.)

The PRESIDENT: I am very glad to hear it.

Mr BRUFORD: With regard to what Canon Purcell said respecting the Circular from the Local Government Board asking for numerous details, he should advise Boards to say what Taunton had, namely, "We will do it if you will pay for it."

A DELEGATE: They have sufficient power to compel us.

Mr A. R. WHITE (Mere) said a previous speaker introduced herself as not being a Guardian, but he would introduce himself as being a Guardian and Chairman of Guardians, and he ventured to protest against any assumption that Guardians were chiefly responsible for the increasing burden on the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration. He alluded to the Superannuation Act and to the increases of salary brought by extra work being thrown

upon their officers by Orders which from time to time had been issued by the Local Government Board, to show how expenditure increased for which Guardians were not really responsible. Another point which he quoted was the provision for lunatics made by county councils and charged to Boards of Guardians, and therefore they were not responsible for any increased cost of maintenance. With regard to the inmates under their own care the increased cost was somewhat the result of the newer dietary. (No, no.) Someone said "No, no," but he believed that he was correct in saying that in many Unions the cost of the dietary was much greater now than ten years ago. With regard to vaccination the increased cost had been brought about by the Act of 1899, for which Boards of Guardians were not responsible. (Hear, hear.) In Wiltshire the cost of vaccination had increased no less than 300 per cent. Boards of Guardians were not responsible, because the fees were laid down by the Local Government Board. With regard to out-relief, Boards of Guardians were responsible, but he never heard yet any ratepayer begrudge the money paid in out-relief. (Laughter.) He never heard it. Reference had been made, or he had heard it suggested, that it would be far better for the Poor Law administration to be transferred to the county council, but as a ratepayer he strongly protested against that transference. (Cheers.) They all knew what the result of centralisation meant; that it got into the hands of officials who carried out their duties regardless of the interests of the ratepayers. (Cheers.)

The PRESIDENT moved: "That it be an instruction to the Standing Committee to formulate proposals for the formation of benevolent relief committees in every Union, to work in connection with the Poor Law and other agencies, the Standing Committee to communicate with the Boards of Guardians in the district on the subject and to report to the next Conference, and that the Standing Committee have power for this purpose to add to their number." He thought that that resolution seemed to put very well what he gathered to have been urged by the readers of the papers, and by one or two of those who had spoken to the papers. If the Conference approved of the resolution the result would be that the Standing Committee would communicate with the different Boards of Guardians in the district, and would endeavour to persuade them to form in their district benevolent relief committees associated with themselves, and then at the next Conference the Standing Committee would be expected to receive and formulate for the information of the Conference any results that may have been achieved. It seemed to him that such an attempt was well worth making, and he was very glad to move that resolution from the chair.

Rev. Prebendary NORTON-THOMPSON (Bath) said he had been asked by the Standing Committee to second the resolution, and he gladly did so. He wished to make one observation in reference to a remark made by the worthy Mayor of Bath. He should be sorry

if people derived the impression that the expenditure in the Cottage Homes was excessive. He thought that money expended on those Homes was well spent. If they wanted to strike at pauperism they must strike at the roots and tackle the children. (Cheers.) Though it did cost what it did, the money was not thrown away, and one would be sorry to see a curtailment of expenditure in that particular direction. Most of those who were Guardians had had experience of cases: perhaps a family was in great distress, and it all depended upon their being able to help them over a particular crisis, and at this psychological moment, so to speak, when a family wanted help, and if it were not helped would drift into pauperism, they were powerless to assist, and that was where he thought some kind of society or relief committee would be of great value. (Cheers.) He would ask them to remember that this resolution was only of a tentative character for them to see what could be done and report to the next Conference. He was quite sure that it was desirable for them if possible to prevent people from going down hill before they got to the very bottom of the hill. (Hear, hear.)

Mr UNDERHILL moved as an amendment: "That it is the opinion of this Conference that the Standing Committee should further discuss the question dealt with in the papers read on the increasing burden of the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration, with a view to approaching Boards of Guardians and the Local Government Board on the necessary reforms." He did not think that they were all satisfied that the necessary reforms could be carried out by starting reforms under charity organisation. (Hear, hear.) There were many of them who thought that it would not meet the requirements of to-day's Poor Law system. If the Standing Committee went into the matter generally of the Poor Law system, and if in their opinion they then decided that the charity organisation society was the right plan, they could bring up a report to that effect. (Cheers.) The resolution which had been moved seemed somewhat to bind themselves to adopt some definite charity in connection with the Poor Law relief, which would not, he thought, be acceptable to the country generally. (Cheers.)

Mr G. CURTIS (Poole) seconded the amendment. His opinion was that charity organisations would take more money for their administration than they would give to the poor. (Oh!)

The PRESIDENT: I think I may point out that these relief committees would be absolutely out of connection with any charity organisation; they would be in connection with the Board.

The amendment was carried by a large majority, and it was then put as the substantive resolution and adopted.

OUT OF ORDER.

Canon PURCELL asked if he would be in order in moving a resolution on the expense which the Local Government Board had

put upon Boards of Guardians by the exhaustive returns they had asked for

The PRESIDENT.—I am afraid that you would not be in order. No resolution will be allowed save those which either have regard to the business of the Conference or have direct reference to the papers.

CONFERENCE DINNER.

The Conference Dinner took place in the evening at the Assembly Rooms. The toast list was confined to the loyal toasts, followed by that of "The Mayor of Bath," which was proposed by Mr G. C. Gooch, M.P.

RECEPTION BY THE MAYOR AND MAYORESS.

The whole of the Delegates attending the Conference were invited to a reception which was given by the Mayor and Mayoress at the Grand Pump Room and Roman Promenade. The guests, who numbered over 800, and included all the members of the Bath Board of Guardians and the Poor Law officials, began to arrive at half-past nine o'clock, and the proceedings did not terminate until two o'clock on Thursday morning. The reception was one of the most brilliant of the social functions which graced Mr Oliver's term of office as Mayor.

NEXT YEAR'S CONFERENCE.

When the Conference met again on Thursday morning the PRESIDENT stated that in considering next year's meeting place the Standing Committee were divided between Taunton and Salisbury. They felt that, considering the large proportion of Cornish delegates present, they ought next year to meet in Cornwall, but the representatives of that county very generously waived their claim because of the difficulty many delegates from distant parts would experience in travelling to any Cornish town. Taunton and Salisbury were more easily reached, and he would ask for a vote on those two alternatives.

Exeter was suggested as a more approachable centre, and convenient to Cornishmen, but the Hon. Secretary explained that it was hardly desirable to choose Exeter this year, because the British Medical Association had already arranged to meet there. On a show of hands a large majority then voted for Taunton.

YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES.

Mrs ATHELSTAN COODE (Wells) read the paper which Miss Clifford (Bristol) had written on "Young Mothers in Workhouses." She expressed her regret that Miss Clifford was not able to read her own paper, adding that she supposed no one had done more for the

cause of Poor Law work than Miss Clifford, whose work had been going on for a great many years, and was of a most sympathetic, kind, and loving nature. If any justification of the inclusion of women on Boards of Guardians were needed, she thought Miss Clifford's work was the thing which would justify it. (Cheers.)

Miss Clifford's paper was then read as follows :—

YOUNG MOTHERS IN WORKHOUSES.

By Miss MARY CLIFFORD,

Guardian, Parish of Bristol.

WE are always grateful to a Conference that is willing to consider this difficult, and in some ways, painful, subject. It cannot be understood except as just one part of the wide subject of social betterment. The class to be dealt with cannot be judged or helped by itself alone, and therefore the co-operation of many is required and it is of untold use to think out the matter together.

It is not necessary to an audience like this to prove the prevalence of the evil or the need of a remedy. There is not a Guardian present who does not see and deplore the presence of these unmarried mothers in the Workhouse ; many of them there for by no means the first time. It is, however, a burden and disgrace which ought not to be regarded as inevitable. We desire and expect two things, to discourage and diminish the causes of the evil and to raise and reform the individuals one by one.

May I begin by clearing the ground. Every one who has had personal experience of these young women knows that a considerable number, perhaps a third, are of more or less feeble minds. The degree of feebleness varies, and only now and then is one deficient enough to be certified by the medical officer for detention in the imbecile wards. But they are all of them to be pitied. They are unprotected and unable to take care of themselves or of their poor little children. The only safe and kind and satisfactory

arrangement is to give them protection. Since the establishment of the voluntary homes for the feeble-minded in and after 1890, no feeble-minded girl from the Bristol Union Schools has drifted into the sad company of these hapless, weak-minded young mothers. The Guardians have placed all their definitely weak-minded school girls who were without natural protectors in one or other of the voluntary homes.

We therefore earnestly hope that detention of the feeble-minded of both sexes will be recommended by the Commission still sitting and for whose Report we are waiting. Therefore we may now confine our attention to the ordinary responsible women who come under our care in the maternity wards of the Workhouse.

The first thing that appeals to us is this, when they come to us there, we have to deal not with the wrongdoing but with its result. Such girls, whatever their history, come to us in connection with the sacred fact of motherhood—and that, let us remember, is the one hopeful and ennobling element in the case. To treat that fact in itself as a crime, or to try to deter a girl from coming to the only refuge open to her, is to commit a dangerous mistake. We must go farther back and look for the real evil and find its cause. Is it not, in nearly all these cases, the fatal, reckless irresponsibility of both father and mother that is the root and cause of the trouble? To check it we must bring home to both the sense of responsibility and the sense of duty. They must see and the community must see, that life is a serious thing, that responsibility cannot be shirked, and that the only way of peace is to face our duties and take up our burdens. That is the real and the one satisfactory deterrent to continued wrongdoing. The father, therefore, must not be allowed to evade the maintenance of his child, and the mother must be saved through her self-denying mother-love. She must learn through the necessary discipline of the Workhouse

what she has very likely not had a chance of learning before.

The effort to obtain a maintenance order is, strange to say, one rarely made in most Unions. In the Bristol Union it has been for several years the custom to have each case investigated, and, when possible, to institute proceedings. Out of 417 cases only 156 have failed from want of due evidence; 101 orders or agreements have been made during the four years from 1901 to 1905. Matrons and Ladies' Committee have co-operated with the inquiry officer, chiefly by convincing the women that a real effort was being made to help them. Indeed the whole success must depend on the spirit in which the matter is carried through. If these girls once realise that the Board desires to help them to make an honest start in life, that the past is to be left behind, and that for the sake of the child they must be steady and respectable—well, they are likely to tell the truth, and make it possible for an order or an agreement to be made.

It is to be desired that a maintenance order should cover the expense to the Union from the time that a woman becomes chargeable. Several Unions have petitioned for this lately, and if the law were so altered, it would encourage the practice of endeavouring to obtain orders of affiliation.

There are several other desirable amendments into which we cannot enter to-day.

It has lately been urged that power should be conferred on Guardians to detain mothers of illegitimate children for a year. This, it is said, would effect at least three improvements. It would, it is contended, act as a deterrent and keep some from coming to the Workhouse; it would, it is said secondly, be a safeguard in preventing others from going out; and it would finally, it is asserted, give the time and inducement necessary for obtaining maintenance orders.

The test of a suggested remedy for a moral evil

must always be—Does it undermine any moral principle? This proposed remedy, we fear, does. It would treat as a punishable offence in a woman what the common law does not recognise as a crime, and thus enforce an unequal moral standard. It would be a onesided and therefore very unfair arrangement. Again, by deterring a destitute woman from entering the Workhouse, there can be no doubt infanticide and other deplorable crime would increase. These flaws are serious enough to put the proposed remedy out of court. But it may be added that detention, to be of any use as a safeguard, must be not for a year but for many years, and possibly permanent. It is true that some of these women are our despair. They come again and again and again to the maternity wards. But they are not really a large class. If individually examined, it will be found that a large proportion of these constantly returning cases are feeble-minded, and would rightly be detained on that ground and not because they are mothers. Others are not so hopeless as they appear. We ought not to despair of them. They are capable of being taught self-restraint through their mother-love. I know some who have voluntarily remained and worked hard in the House for the sake of their children. Matrons and officers and friends who sincerely care for these young women are often rewarded by seeing far better moral results than onlookers would expect. It is of course a great mistake to do that entirely illegal thing—to keep a child or children and let the mother go out. It is possible to be stern and yet kind and understanding, and that is the treatment these weak natures respond to. It is possible that in the future we shall see general legislation for all able-bodied paupers with a view to their reclamation, which will touch both men and women, and be quite different in its methods and aims from the crude proposal we have been considering.

There are three very important matters which are worth observing, all of them tending to raise these mothers and touch the evil we have been considering at its source.

The first is that we, as Guardians, should do all in our power to prevent the contamination of the many comparatively innocent girls who come into our wards. I don't wish to use the word classification, because it is practically impossible to effect it in this case. The only effectual course is to ensure the presence of right-minded officers. That is the reliable way to prevent bad conversation. At work, in the dormitory, in the evenings, on Sundays, the more respectable and nice-minded girls ought not to be left alone with those whose life and conversation have been bad. It is fair that a Workhouse should be a place bare of luxury, but it must be wrong, and it cannot be inevitable, that it should be a sink of iniquity. Matrons and hospital superintendents who care and who feel they have the sympathy of the Board in this matter can do much. What we owe to some of them for their self-denying, Christian-minded efforts cannot be told. They can and often do change the whole moral atmosphere of the wards.

In the second place the young mothers—*all* the mothers, in fact—should be definitely taught to know and practice the proper way to bring up children. They are generally ignorant of the simplest laws of health and sanitation. These things can be taught. The thing is being done in a few Workhouses, and is well worth doing. The dulness of Workhouse life rather disposes them to be interested in homely talks on those matters, and there are plenty of object lessons to be had. "How to wash the baby," "What *not* to give her to eat," can easily be illustrated, and in that way clearly understood. The National Health Society has some excellent leaflets on the subject.

Lastly, may I venture to hope that every Union

represented here to-day has a few women of experience who visit and help the young mothers in the wards? No girl should leave the Workhouse without knowing that a friend was willing to advise and perhaps help her. The mother-love which is the saving of the future life of these girls is a plant which grows far more vigorously in good conditions. Matrons, nurses, and a small committee of ladies co-operating, see what can be done for many a young mother, who alone could not steer her way safely with a little child depending on her. It is an untold pity to separate mother and child, and there are certain Homes which keep both, and train the mother to be able to earn an honest living. There is no institution which I so much wish to see copied as the St Andrew's Home on Hayling Island. A girl of fifteen, whom we sent there with her child several years ago, has now for a long time been earning £20 a year in the laundry of an institution, and of course supporting her child and herself respectably.

May I conclude by saying that *the* whole subject may well be faced with hope. It is full of good surprises. It has been treated too much as a hopeless matter. It needs the attention not only of a few rescue workers but of the Guardians, who have, as I have tried to show, the power to make the conditions of Workhouse life so much more favourable to the restoration of these young women, and so much more conducive to a right standard of conduct outside the Workhouse.

I should like to add how very much in Bristol we are indebted to our clerk and inquiry officers for the manner in which the investigations have been conducted, and for the spirit which has pervaded the treatment of the whole matter.

DISCUSSION.

Her Grace the Duchess of SOMERSET, representing the Mere Union, opened the discussion, remarking, however, that she had come to learn, and had already learned a great deal. She would like before speaking on Miss Clifford's paper to refer to some remarks made the previous day. She could not see that placing all the hospitals and an unknown quantity of other charities upon the rates, as was suggested, would in any way diminish the burden upon the public—in fact it would enormously increase the rating, and she thought no one of them could foresee the effect upon the State that such legislation would have. She thought they must be very careful and beware of stemming the splendid spontaneous charity which existed all over the empire. In London alone over five millions of money was given every year in spontaneous charity, and that would no doubt cease if the hospitals were thrown upon the rates. Doctors, too, would no longer give their services, as now, gratuitously, for she had been told by many eminent doctors that their great interest lay in their own special hospital. She did not know where the expense would end if everything was thrown upon the rates, and personally she could not at all agree with the suggestion. It was such a far-reaching proposal that they could hardly appreciate what it meant. There would be many more empty houses, and she could assure them that in many instances money which used to be spent in this country was going out as quickly as it could for that and other reasons. The other day she was told of a man who was so dissatisfied with the way the rates were going up that he sold——

The Duchess was interrupted by an appeal to the chair on a point of order, the object being to confine the debate to that morning's paper, and the President upheld the objection, informing her Grace that the discussion on the subject she had been speaking on was closed on Wednesday.

The Duchess said she thought it was a great pity she was not told that before. Proceeding to discuss Miss Clifford's paper, she expressed regret at the absence of its writer, and said she had read it with very great interest, for it contained a great deal of truth. She could not help feeling that their work as Guardians was rather like patchwork. Everybody had a little bit of it to do. It was a most excellent, conscientious, and useful work, and she thought the protection of the feeble-minded, and those who could not protect themselves, was one of its most important branches. Many of the young mothers they had to deal with would not get into such trouble if they were in happier circumstances, and were better looked after, and when once they did come under the care of the Guardians, she thought they should take great care of them for a considerable time after the birth of their children. Her Grace quoted a pathetic case from the Mere Union, illustrating the danger of allowing a young unmarried mother of weak intellect to leave the Workhouse, and go

back into the world without protection. They needed to have a certain amount of control over girls unable to look after themselves. She did not believe in a centralised administration for Poor Law purposes. They wanted common-sense on Boards of Guardians. Those living in a certain district knew best what was best for the district, and were able to take the individual personal interest in the people which was so helpful in cases of the kind they had in mind. She quite approved of keeping a mother in the Workhouse for, say, three or four months after childbirth, and of an effort being made to find her work instead of sending her out into the world without any means of providing for her helpless baby. She did not speak as one ignorant of child-life, and the help which could be given to it, for she had been for eighteen years on the N.S.P.C.C. executive, and this year alone they had dealt with the sufferings of no fewer than 108,000 children. (Cheers.) She knew something about the subject, and she believed that every small child, in whatever condition of life it came into the world, whether in a Workhouse or in happier surroundings, had all the rights of citizenship of a great empire like their own. (Cheers.)

Rev. Canon PURCELL (Chairman, St Austell) said he thought any pressure which could be brought to bear upon the parents of an unfortunate girl who had gone wrong, to keep her at home rather than send her out into the world unprotected, should certainly be used.

Mr CURTIS (Chairman, Poole) asked whether the Guardians had any right to detain a mother in the Workhouse more than a month? If they did they interfered with the liberty of the subject. They could not do so until they had legislation on the matter. Personally he would like to see legislation which would enable them to keep a mother in the House for at least nine months.

Mr T. H. O. PEASE (Okehampton) said the subject was somewhat difficult to discuss at such a meeting, but he thought one point which they ought to impress upon Boards of Guardians was, that the ladies on those Boards ought to be specially encouraged to take up the work referred to by Miss Clifford in her paper. Most Boards of Guardians, he supposed, now had lady members, and it was very difficult for the Board as a whole to deal with such cases in any but a formal way, but the ladies by a kindly personal interest could do a great deal towards the reclamation of the girls, and the prevention of those sad cases which sometimes came before them year after year. A great deal was said the previous day about the wish to lower the rates, and that was one way in which he would like to see a saving—the saving of those children being brought under their care year after year. He hoped that when the time came round again for the election of Guardians that point would not be forgotten—the great value of the personal work of ladies on the Boards.

Mrs COODE said she was not of course personally responsible for the paper she had read, but she was deeply interested in it. It

seemed very strange that in most Unions maintenance orders were rarely made. She really did not know previously that such orders could be obtained, and she did not think it was done in their Union, but she felt that it was a most beneficial course to take. It was a most unfair thing that all the trouble and pain and sin should be thrown upon the shoulders of the woman—(hear, hear)—and that the man should go free. She felt very strongly about that—she was almost afraid to say how much she felt—for it seemed to her so terrible and unconscientious where a man who was the father of a child took no responsibility, but did just as he chose. It seemed so un-English, and so unlike what the men of their nation should be. Publicity, no doubt, was unpleasant, and she thought that anything they could do which was likely to act as a deterrent should certainly be done.

Mrs FULLER (Chippenham) spoke of the great disappointment she and others felt at Miss Clifford's absence. One point which she thought had not been sufficiently touched upon was the advantage of detaining a young mother in the Workhouse until a maintenance order had been obtained. (Hear, hear.) In many cases great pressure was put upon young mothers by those whom she could hardly call their friends, but by those who knew them before they entered the Workhouse, to leave at the earliest possible moment in order to avoid the possibility of the Guardians obtaining a maintenance order. The medical officer at the Workhouse, she believed, generally endeavoured to keep the mother for the full month after confinement on the plea of health. He would not let her leave the maternity ward, at all events, until he felt sure that she was strong enough for a full day's work, and in that way the Guardians were able to keep the mothers for the month, but after that time they were able to do a day's work, and therefore took their discharge. That month after the baby's birth did not give sufficient time for the necessary magisterial proceedings to obtain an order, and when once the mother left the Workhouse the Guardians had no power, while the girl's relations, as a rule, had not the means, to continue the proceedings. Miss Clifford, in her paper, suggested that one result of detention in the Workhouse might possibly be increased infanticide. She (Mrs Fuller) took an entirely different view. She thought that if they could detain the children and their mothers in the Workhouse for at least six months they would give the infants a fair start in the world. They would be able to see that a baby was properly nurtured, properly fed, properly cleansed (which was a most important matter affecting its health), and properly cared for in every way during those first six months of its life. They would also be able to see that the mother was properly fed and cared for, so that when she took her discharge she was better able to face the world, while the child would have a better chance of growing up into healthy and strong childhood, youth, and manhood. (Cheers.) If a child was removed from the care of the nurses and medical officer at so early

an age as a few weeks, the temptation to a mother, with little mother-love in her heart, was indeed strong to deprive the child gradually of nourishment, and so cause its early death. That was not infanticide, perhaps, but it had the same result, and she felt that the detention of the mother for the sake of the child might be a very justifiable limitation of the liberty of the subject. (Cheers.)

Miss JOAN FRY (Long Ashton) regarded the personal care and interest shown in the young mother and her child by lady Guardians as most helpful. A great deal of diversity was required in dealing with those cases. She did not see how by altering the law and having any particular woman kept in for six months they would really solve the question. It could only be done by personal effort, and for that reason she thought there would be great benefit from the establishment of women's aid committees in every Union. They had one in their little Union, and she believed no woman went into the Workhouse in such circumstances without some effort being made to keep in personal touch with her by one of the ladies on the committee. She hoped they would not think the question could be solved by legislation. Every case was so individual and so different from every other that they could not force one law upon all. They must not look to legislation for the work that had to be done. Nor did she think they would arrive at a solution of the difficulty merely by detaining the mothers. She thought it was an injustice. They must try to cement together the broken family. It was practically because the children went out into the world without any background of family or home that they were at such a disadvantage. More pains should be taken to try to bring the man and the woman together, and then they would have cemented the home, which was the real thing the child wanted. It was a matter for great personal care and interest, and they must remember that a great deal of after care was required. If only every Board formed a ladies' aid committee they would have done a great deal. It meant years of work, for they had in their Union women who had been going to the Workhouse for five or six years, and they still had to help and befriend them.

Sir HENRY PETO (Beaminster) remarked that it was a ladies' question, and he did not wish to speak on it, but there was one point he would like to mention, having been connected with the National Refuge in London and charity organisation work. Good as was the work done by Guardians when the cases were in the Workhouse, it must be followed up by those who interested themselves in the girls, keeping in touch with them, and following them up after they left the institution.

Mr WETHERED (Local Government Board Inspector) pointed out that they had to consider not only the mother but the infant she had brought into the world, and he was disposed to think that power might be given to Guardians to detain the mother unless they could be satisfied that some proper provision was to be made for the

infant. What struck him as an Inspector going round to the various Workhouses was the number of children taken out of the Workhouses prematurely and brought back again in a very emaciated condition, very often in such a condition that their struggle for life was very much hampered if not entirely done away with. He quite agreed with all that had been said about the hardship on the mother from the fact that the father went scot free. The matter was one to the importance of which he specially referred himself two years ago, but it was very difficult to produce the evidence necessary for confirmation. Still he thought it was a question which Guardians might follow up rather more energetically than they had done hitherto. The question was most important. One was very sorry for the woman, and the child too, and he could support Miss Clifford's statement that many—he believed the majority—of those girls were below the average in mental capacity. He did not say they were actually imbeciles, though some of them were, but many of them were getting on towards it, and one of the great advantages of having lady Guardians was that they could give special attention to those cases.

The PRESIDENT, bringing the discussion to a close, said he most earnestly hoped that Guardians attending the Conference would not allow their fellow-Guardians to forget what had been said. He was glad to hear the Inspector back up the view that the responsibility of the father was at least as great as the responsibility of the son to maintain his parent. He thought that where the father could be found the Guardians ought to be as strict as they could in levying contributions.

THE VAGRANCY PROBLEM.

Before the President called upon Colonel Clayton to read his paper on the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, the Hon. Secretary read the following passage from Sir William Chance's letter of apology for absence:—"I do hope the Conference will support the Report of the Vagrancy Committee. The present system seems to be absolutely indefensible, and merely to encourage vagrancy. For the professional vagrant it has no fears. Divided authority never can answer. The West Midland Conference last May passed a resolution supporting the Report, and I do hope that your Conference will follow suit. I am sure that the more the arguments of the Report are considered, the more will they obtain support. The main question is, 'Shall the care and control of male adult vagrants be transferred from the Poor Law to the police authorities?' If this is agreed on, all minor difficulties can be overcome."

Colonel E. CLAYTON (Bath) then read the following paper:—

REPORT OF DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY.

COLONEL E. CLAYTON,

Poor Law Guardian, Bath.

THE question of Vagrancy has been a burning one for centuries. The modern history of the subject begins in 1495 with an Act of Henry VII., and in the reign of Henry VIII., Edward VI., Mary, and Elizabeth numerous Acts were passed dealing with "sturdy vagabonds" and "violent beggars," the earlier Acts treating them with great severity, but the later ones evincing a more humane spirit, and combining with punishments injunctions to the local authorities to take measures to maintain the impotent and aged poor, and also to compel sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars "to be sett and kepte to continuall labour in such wise as by their seid labours they and every one of them may gette their owne livinge with the contynuall labour of their owne handes."

Yet in spite of such early enactments, and all that have succeeded them, the vagrant is still with us, and the problem of his improvement and eventual eradication seems almost as far from solution as ever. Nevertheless, the question has been studied in many countries, and numerous experiments have been tried, from which some conclusions may be drawn, and, at all events, the conditions ascertained under which any solution of the problem must be sought.

The Report of the Committee on Vagrancy contains an admirable digest of the evidence that can be obtained on the subject, and it is proposed in the present paper first to give a brief summary of the facts that have been ascertained, and then a sketch of the measures proposed for the improvement of the present state of things, with any observations on them that may suggest themselves.

NUMBERS OF THE VAGRANT CLASS.

It is impossible to obtain any exact enumeration of the vagrants wandering over the country, but the Report comes to the conclusion "that the number of persons with no settled home and no visible means of subsistence probably reaches, at times of trade depression, as high a total as 70,000 or 80,000, while in times of industrial activity (as in 1900) it might not exceed 30,000 or 40,000." As regards the habitual vagrants, whom trade conditions do not affect, the Commissioners are inclined to think that the total number would not exceed 20,000 to 30,000. The Report says also that abundant proof has been obtained of recent increase in vagrancy. The statistics of the Local Government Board show a continuous rise from 1900 to 1905 in the inmates of casual wards, while returns from chief constables show that a similar increase has taken place amongst vagrants generally. This increase is attributed to the return to the country of large numbers of reservists and militiamen after the Boer War, and to the depression in trade that has been experienced since 1900. Evidence was also given that the effect of the Workmen's Compensation Act and the growth of unskilled labour is to increase vagrancy.

CLASSIFICATION OF VAGRANTS.

In trying to devise remedies for vagrancy, it is of the utmost importance to obtain a clear idea of the differences that exist between vagrants and of the relative numbers of the different classes. The Report distinguishes four types.

1. The *bona-fide* working-man travelling in search of employment. It is probable that at ordinary times this class forms a very small proportion of the body of vagrants—not more than 2 or 3 per cent. Mr Crooks, M.P., did not think it would be more than 1 per cent. in London. In times of trade depression, however,

there are, no doubt, a larger number of genuine working men on tramp, and at times a considerable number of navvies on their way to railway and other works, and of sailors journeying from one port to another, make use of the casual wards.

Whatever view may be taken of their numbers, it is certainly of the utmost importance that every effort should be made to distinguish between this class and the ordinary tramps, and the Committee make, later on, some suggestions on this head.

2. The men who are willing to undertake casual labour for a short time, but object to, or are unfit for, any continued work. The men of this class are almost sure eventually to fall into the ranks of the habitual vagrant.

3. The habitual vagrant, the man who may be professedly in search of work, but who certainly has no desire to find it. These are professional beggars, and, though not much addicted to the worst forms of crime, yet are guilty of many minor offences, such as petty larcenies, the extorting of alms by threats, especially when they find women alone in houses, and assaults on the highway.

4. Old and infirm persons who wander about to their own hurt: many of them are crazy, all live by begging, and give much trouble to police and magistrates.

If this classification is approximately correct, as it no doubt is, it is obvious that one rigid method of treatment is inadequate to the circumstances. What is required is some system by which (i.) the *bona-fide* workman is helped on his way, and assisted in obtaining employment; (ii.) the men of the second class have inducements and facilities given them of becoming steady workers; (iii.) the habitual vagrant may be deterred from continuing on the road by compelling him to work, at the same time giving him the chance of raising his status; and (iv.) the fourth class to be

removed from their present dangerous and degrading mode of life, and placed for the remaining span of their lives in abodes of at least some degree of comfort.

It will next be desirable to see what are the present means of dealing with vagrants in this country, and then take a short survey of methods in force in other lands, and finally see what are the recommendations of the Departmental Committee.

CASUAL WARDS.

Practically the only means of dealing with vagrants at present in this country is by the casual wards belonging to the various Poor Law Union authorities. A vagrant, before entering a casual ward, has to obtain an order of admission either from a relieving officer or from the assistant relieving officer for vagrants, who is either a policeman or, in small Unions, an officer of the Workhouse. In cases of sudden or urgent necessity, the master admits a vagrant without an order.

Now, the evidence shows that at present there is no uniformity in the administration of the various casual wards. In many of them tramps are not regularly bathed or searched, in many more the two nights' detention is not enforced, while in some no task of work is required at all. The consequence is that there is a concentration of tramps towards those wards where the conditions are easiest. The Local Government Board publish annually a table showing the number of refusals to admit on account of want of room at the various casual wards in London. In 1904 two-thirds of these refusals were in five wards out of the twenty-eight. In these five wards the conditions were very easy, while at Chelsea and St Pancras, where the detention and task are rigidly enforced, there have been no refusals for want of room for the last seven years. This shows the encouragement to tramps which lax administration affords.

Briefly, it may be said that the present system of casual wards brings no discrimination to bear between the different classes of vagrants and has no reforming influence, but, on the contrary, rather gives encouragement to the habitual tramp to continue in his mode of life. He is sure of a clean sleeping place and sufficient food, and during the day is certain of getting plenty of good food outside from indiscriminate charity.

Although, speaking generally, the casual wards are the only agencies in England and Wales for dealing with both *bona-fide* workers in search of employment and with habitual tramps, yet some more or less isolated attempts have been made to give better help to the *bona-fide* working-men. The most important of these attempts is by that which is called the "Berkshire Way-Ticket System," which was adopted in Berkshire, but eventually dropped, it is said, owing to lack of co-operation in adjoining counties. It is now in force in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire. The plan adopted is as follows:—On entering the county a vagrant applies to the assistant relieving officer for vagrants, who issues to him a way-ticket, on which is marked the man's description, the place he comes from, and his destination. On the ticket are spaces for the names of the casual wards he will pass, and a list of stations where he can obtain a mid-day meal of bread. With his ticket the vagrant goes to the casual ward and is treated in the ordinary way. On leaving, the superintendent of the casual ward marks on the ticket the name of the casual ward he should next go to on his direct route to his destination, and also a station where he can get a mid-day meal of bread. If in the evening the man arrives at the proper casual ward, he has what is called a "good" ticket, and is detained for one night only, but if he goes to any other ward, or has no ticket, he would be considered a "bad" ticket man, and be detained for the usual two nights.

Thus by this system a man steadily making his way to a certain destination has an advantage over other vagrants in being detained only one night in any ward, and the mid-day meal is said in Gloucestershire and Wiltshire to have reduced begging and almsgiving. This latter is an important point, for the Commissioners consider, from the evidence they have received, that one great reason for the prevalence of vagrancy is the facility with which vagrants are able to obtain food during the day, either from charitable but mistaken people or by intimidation.

A few attempts have also been made by mendicity societies to check indiscriminate almsgiving by the provision of bread-tickets entitling to a mid-day meal of bread. But the evidence given to the Commission was conflicting as to the effect. In some cases it was said to have had a useful effect in diminishing indiscriminate almsgiving, but, on the other hand, it was stated that the police found it made their task harder, for if they found a man loafing about a house in the country, and were suspicious of his intentions, he could disarm them by saying he was only going to ask for a bread-ticket. It would seem, however, that some measure of this kind might have good results if widely understood and acted upon.

PUNISHMENT OF VAGRANT OFFENDERS.

It was proved to the satisfaction of the Commissioners that short periods of imprisonment are useless for dealing with this class, as it is impossible to make prison conditions for short periods deterrent to vagrant offenders, while sufficiently long periods could not be given without injustice. Therefore other treatment should be provided for them. The Commission recommend labour colonies for this purpose.

LABOUR COLONIES.

The Commission took a large amount of evidence about the labour colonies that have been established in various countries on the Continent.

HOLLAND AND BELGIUM.

In 1818 a charitable organisation established colonies in Holland and Belgium. Some were free colonies, and the Society still maintains three of these, but the scheme does not seem very successful, and the number of inmates is diminishing.

The *Beggar Colonies* were intended for the compulsory detention of the vagrant class. They got into financial difficulties, and were eventually taken over by the Governments.

In Belgium, "Depôts de Mendicité" are intended for the reception of able-bodied men who are professional beggars or live in a state of vagrancy, and for certain other classes, such as inebriates, persons convicted of immoral offences, &c. The principal dépôt is at Merxplas. Persons are committed to a dépôt by a judicial authority on summary conviction for a period of not less than two or more than seven years. The intention seems to be to treat habitual vagrants and beggars, not as criminals requiring punishment, but as persons requiring treatment on account of their mode of life.

The population of Merxplas on 1st January 1905 was 5,110. The work is land reclamation, farming, and the manufacture of all kinds of articles required in the colony and for disposal outside. Although the colony does not teach trades, it enables the colonists to retain and perfect their knowledge of their own trades. The money value of the work done is considerable. A grant of about 6d. a day is made to the colony in respect of each able-bodied inmate, paid in equal parts by the State, the province, and the com-

muné. With this aid the accounts show an excess of receipts over expenditure. The colonists can earn from 1d. to 3d. a day, of which half is retained by the management until discharge, while the other half is given to the men monthly in tokens to spend, if they like, at the canteen on food, tobacco, &c. The Commissioners who visited the colony were much impressed with the great ability shown in the management of so difficult an institution. But it seemed clear that the discipline has no reformatory effect, owing mainly to the lack of classification and the absence of religious influences. "Once a colonist, always a colonist" seems to be perfectly true of this institution. There is no doubt, however, that the colony is effective in clearing the streets of beggars and loafers, and during his detention it prevents the colonist from doing harm to the general public.

GERMANY.

There are thirty-three labour colonies in Germany and one in England for destitute Germans. These German colonies are under the management of a charitable association. Admission to these is purely voluntary, and there is no compulsion to remain. On the whole, though the object of these colonies is to effect some moral reformation, it does not appear that this object is attained, because the time of stay is not long enough, and the discipline is not strict enough. They are of little use for dealing with the habitual vagrant class.

For dealing with habitual vagrants, there are in Germany twenty-four workhouses, each province having one at least. Under the Imperial Code the following classes of persons are liable to detention in a workhouse for a period not exceeding two years:—

1. Any one who wanders about as a vagabond.
2. Beggars or causes his children to beg
3. Through gambling, drunkenness, or idleness has to apply for relief.

4. Who, in receipt of relief, refuses to do work given him by the authorities.

5. Who, after losing his lodging, fails to procure another within a certain time.

There are no sentences for less than three months, the average length being a year. They are, in fact, a kind of prison.

It appears to be the opinion in Germany that they have diminished vagrancy, and the statistics show that the number of commitments is decreasing. And on account of the length of the sentence, it is believed that some influence for good is exercised on the men.

SWITZERLAND.

In Switzerland there are three voluntary colonies. Compulsory colonies are more numerous, nearly every canton having one. These colonies are generally small.

I have recently been in Switzerland, and while there had the opportunity of seeing the colony at Witzwyl, where I noticed certain things which may prove helpful in considering the subject. Witzwyl is spoken of in the Report as having only 200 inmates. As a matter of fact even that number is rather too high. The maximum number that they can admit is 190, and they are really crowded if they have more than 150. At the time I was there there were only about 120 or 130. The opinion certainly seemed to be held that this colony decidedly effects a considerable amount of reformatory work. The superintendent told me that about 25 per cent. of those who went there were permanently benefited by the treatment. Of course that is not a large proportion, but still this colony has only been at work about ten years, and if already 25 per cent. are benefited it may be hoped that as time goes on the proportion will be continually increased. I think the main reason why it is successful is that the number of officials who act as supervisors is large as compared with the number of

inmates. There are forty-two supervisors of various sorts, who act as foremen of small gangs of labourers and work with them, so that they lead the men to work rather than drive them. I don't think it must be supposed that this large staff is a cause of very great expense, because the accounts of the colony for the year show that while the total expense of the colony was about £7,000, about £6,200 was covered by the produce of the colony itself, so that the contribution required from the State was not more than £800. The Swiss colonies certainly seem to have a reforming effect. I was in Switzerland two or three weeks, and I never saw a beggar the whole time.

Generally in Switzerland the compulsory colonies appear to have had more success in a reformatory sense than elsewhere, probably because the colonists can receive more individual attention. The voluntary colonies have not been established long enough to have yet had a fair trial.

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.

I. AS REGARDS CASUAL WARDS.

The Committee consider that on account of the present want of uniformity in management it is necessary to extend the area of chargeability and management, and to substitute for the Guardians some other authority who can administer the law on uniform lines and be subject to central control. For this purpose they propose to place casual wards under the control of the police authority. The duty of providing food and lodging to needy wayfarers is one that might quite as properly devolve upon the police as upon the Guardians, because it is mainly as vagrants and not as paupers that they have to be treated. In Scotland the Poor Law authorities have no such duties to perform, and in some places, notably Glasgow, the police do carry out work of this kind. There would be great

advantage in bringing vagrants more closely under the notice of the police, as habitual vagrants, who constitute a large proportion of the vagrant class, are often potential criminals, and the police might be greatly helped in the prevention and detection of crime by having the whole class under surveillance. And there is no reason to suppose that the *bona-fide* working-man in search of work would be prejudiced, especially if a system of way-tickets were adopted, which would have to be carried out by the police.

Further, the extension of chargeability and management which the Committee consider necessary can best be secured by making the county the area. They do not consider it advisable that a new authority should be established for the purpose, and of the existing authorities the standing joint committee (the police authority) is the most suitable.

The following further recommendations are made under this head which speak for themselves :—

Existing buildings, where required, to be rented or purchased by police authority.

Existing officers of wards to be continued in office.

Diet to be adequate, and on leaving, a wayfarer to be given food for a mid-day meal.

A task of work to be enforced, and to be a time task.

Detention to be for a minimum of two nights, except in case of men with way-tickets.

Expenses of wards to be charged to the Police Fund.

On the whole it would seem as if these recommendations were desirable. It is certainly necessary that more uniformity of administration in casual wards should be attained, and that the expenses of casuals should be more equally distributed, instead of mainly falling, as at present, upon certain Unions situated on large arteries of communication,

ASSISTANCE FOR BONA-FIDE WORK-SEEKERS.

The Committee propose for this purpose a system of way-tickets more discriminating than the Berkshire system, under which a ticket is granted to anyone who obtains admission to the casual ward, on his stating his destination.

The Committee propose that the police should issue a way-ticket to a man who can satisfy them that he has worked at some employment (other than a casual job) within a recent period, say three months, and that he has a reasonable expectation of getting work at a certain place, or has other good reason for going there.

The ticket should contain the man's description and signature, and possibly finger-prints, as a means of identification, the duration being limited to say a month. With this he would go to the casual ward, and be entitled to a night's lodging, supper, and breakfast, and after performing two hours' work, should be free to leave the ward whenever he likes. The name of the next ward in his direct route should be entered in the ticket. The holder of a way-ticket should have better treatment and accommodation than ordinary vagrants, and be kept as far as possible separate from them. On leaving the ward in the morning he should be given a ration of bread and cheese for a mid-day meal. A vagrant without a ticket should only be given a ticket entitling him to food on presenting it at some police station on the way to the next casual ward. If the holder of a way-ticket desires for some adequate reason to change his route, the superintendent of a casual ward, with the concurrence of the police, might have power to authorise the change of route, endorsing the ticket to that effect.

The Committee also recommend that some means should be adopted to enable a man in search of work to know where there is work to be found.

PUNISHMENT OF VAGRANT OFFENDERS.

The Committee find that at present there is no uniformity in the sentences for vagrancy offences, and that there is a consensus of evidence that short sentences of imprisonment are of no use at all. The Committee, therefore, recommend that if a magistrate does not consider a sentence of at least fourteen days is required, it should be limited to one day, the conviction being recorded.

Habitual vagrants should be sent to certified labour colonies for not less than six months or more than three years.

LABOUR COLONIES.

The Committee recommend the establishment of labour colonies to which habitual vagrants may be compulsorily sent for lengthened periods, not less than six months. They recognise that the evidence obtained with regard to labour colonies abroad does not show that the foreign colonies have any great effect in reforming the characters of those consigned to them, but they consider that even if they do not succeed in achieving greater reformatory effects than the colonies abroad, "yet they may clear the streets of the habitual vagrant and loafer, may make him lead a more useful life during his detention, and may offer a real deterrent to those starting on a life of vagrancy."

The Committee recommend that in the first instance labour colonies should be established by local authorities or benevolent societies, so that local conditions may be considered and the want of elasticity of State institutions may be avoided. They think that the best chance of any reformatory effect would be from that personal supervision and care that can only be expected from those who are actuated by religious or charitable motives, and are strongly of opinion that advantage should be taken as far as possible of all religious influences, and think that this could be better done, and

with less friction, in institutions under private management than in those managed by the State.

They therefore propose that Councils of Counties and County Boroughs should have power to establish labour colonies, or to contribute to certified colonies established by other councils or philanthropic agencies. The State should contribute towards the cost of certified colonies.

In order to provide an incentive to work, and encourage the acquirement of a habit of steady work, inmates of colonies should have the power of earning small sums of money for their work.

Discharge before the end of sentence may be allowed under certain circumstances, such as the accumulation of a certain amount of earnings.

Industrial as well as agricultural work should be carried on. Many men would be quite unsuited for agricultural labour, and very little could be done in winter or bad weather.

It is essential that labour colonies should be managed on economical lines, not only to prevent them from being too great a financial burden, but also to prevent them from being too attractive, and an encouragement instead of a deterrent to vagrancy.

The Committee consider that, at least, one colony under State control would have to be founded for such of the habitual vagrants as are not amenable to the discipline of the ordinary colony or, from their frequent escapes and re-committals, need a more severe treatment.

OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS.

The Committee make a number of further recommendations with regard to the supervision of common lodging-houses, the regulation of shelters and free food distributions, the spread of disease by vagrants, sleeping out, and pedlars, with which it is impossible to deal within the limits of this paper; but atten-

tion may be called to suggestions that seem to be sound, that female and child vagrants should be received into the Workhouse instead of the casual wards, and that the children of persons dealt with as habitual vagrants should be sent to industrial schools or other place of safety.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

The pivot upon which the recommendations of the Committee seem to turn is the proposed establishment of labour colonies. The changes with regard to the management of casual wards would be only a transition step, if the labour colonies answered well and produced the effect desired from them—viz., the eventual disappearance of the habitual vagrant. The great question is, therefore, what measure of success may reasonably be expected from labour colonies? Foreign examples do not give altogether encouraging prospects, but it is to be noted that those in Switzerland really do seem to be producing satisfactory results. These colonies are small in size, and have a numerous staff who work with the inmates, and who therefore are able to influence them individually, and act as their leaders rather than their drivers. On the other hand, the Belgian Merxplas, with its 5,000 inmates, seems to exercise little, if any, reformatory influence. These examples point clearly to the conclusion that labour colonies, to be effective for reforming those who have once been on the road, must be limited in size, and so organised as to bring individual influences to bear, and there is no doubt that among those influences should be that of religion. At first, as the Report says, it will not be easy to do much in the way of classification, but as experience is gained, it may be hoped that some form of progression may be found possible, so that men, as they show aptitude and steadiness, may be passed on to establishments with superior

conditions, and eventually discharged into steady employment on their own account.

There is one subject to which the Committee alludes in their conclusion about which a few words may be said. It is that of indiscriminate charity. They say that "were it not for the indiscriminate dole-giving which prevails, there would be little necessity for casual wards or labour colonies for the vagrant, and idle vagrancy, ceasing to be a profitable profession, would come to an end." The truth of this is indisputable, but the difficulty is great in knowing how it is to be remedied. When appeals are made by persons saying their wives or children are starving, and that they have been all day without food, the tender-hearted do not like to refuse, though they may know the prevalence of imposture, for fear of repulsing what may be a genuine case. Would it be an impossibility to devise some scheme by which stations might be established at not too great intervals, at which food might be obtained on the officials in charge being satisfied of the genuineness of the case, without the applicants being obliged to wait till they are received into a casual ward and get their supper there? If this could be done, any private person who was importuned could refer the applicant to the nearest station, and be satisfied that genuine distress would be relieved without risking the encouragement of the professional vagrant by giving himself indiscriminate charity.

In conclusion, it will probably be agreed that the recommendations of the Committee, while in detail they should be subjected to careful examination and alteration should it be found necessary, yet point to the way in which there is most hope that the present unsatisfactory state of things may be ameliorated.

DISCUSSION.

The President was asked before the discussion commenced whether the former resolutions passed by the Conference had been before the Departmental Committee, but he could not say definitely.

Rev. F. W. MACDONALD (Wilton) thanked Colonel Clayton for his admirable paper, saying it was a most carefully compiled digest of the Report. The keynote of the recommendations seemed to him to be the prevention of the propagation of vagrancy. He thought they had been thinking too much of an immediate cure for the present state of affairs instead of considering the best means of preventing the propagation of that great disease. They had been told over and over again that their failure to find a cure was due to two things—their lack of uniformity and indiscriminate charity. Among the reasons for that lack of uniformity was the opportunist policy adopted by some Guardians—a kind of selfish rivalry on their part to get rid of their own vagrants, never minding where they went to. Other Boards showed a kind of spurious humanitarianism. The recommendations in the Report tended to obviate that lack of uniformity by taking away the care of the vagrants from the Guardians and putting them under the charge of a police authority. Up to now the vagrant had flourished between the Poor Law and the police. In future he would have to flourish under the protection of the police alone—(laughter)—if the recommendations were carried out. Then there was their old friend—not really a friend—called indiscriminate charity. He quite agreed with what Colonel Clayton said. How on earth were many of them to discriminate between the unemployed and the unemployable? They had always found it very difficult, and just on the same grounds that a jury would rather let off half a dozen murderers than convict an innocent man, in spite of all that had been said, they gave, and they encouraged vagrancy by so doing. If the Report were acted upon they would have no excuse in future for doing so, because of the admirable way-ticket suggested. One of the most important recommendations was perhaps based on a remark by Mr Preston Thomas. "I would not base that ticket on any statement of the vagrant as to what he is going to do, but on the evidence of what he has done." He had to show that he had worked at some employment other than a casual job, say for three months. Any of them who had lived in the country knew that it was the casual job man who largely fed the army of vagrancy. Before a man got his way-ticket he had to perform a light task (about two hours) and then he was given food for the way. The Report also suggested an agency for providing work, and made the superintendent of each police district responsible for the collection of information. There was one point he did not like, and that was that the ticket was to give the man's personal description, trade, reason for wanting to travel, proposed destination, and possibly finger-prints for the purpose of testing his identity. He did not quite like that, because it made

the honest wayfarer, for whom the ticket was designed, a little bit too much like a criminal. (Hear, hear.) He also thought the ticket should be for more than a month, and permission given to vary the destination if desired. The Report stated that about 5 per cent. of vagrants were discharged soldiers. He thought the inspectors would bear him out that 5 per cent. was rather too low a figure to put it at. To him, indeed, it seemed extraordinary, for he came from a Union where the discharged soldiers during the year ending last month came to over one-third of the total number of vagrants. Of course a good many men put themselves down as discharged soldiers when they had no certificate to give, but what he wanted to know was, under which class of wayfarer was the old soldier to be reckoned? It was stated by one of the inspectors that a great many soldiers went into the army from a vagrant turn of mind, but he (Mr Macdonald) could not agree that the army discipline improved such men, because on coming out they missed the sergeant's "Turn to the right," and "Turn to the left," and were more helpless than before. He had lost any connection he previously had with a trade, and trade unionism would make it very difficult for him to restore that connection. He could not agree with the divided authority which would result from the proposal to make the Workhouse master superintendent of a vagrant ward under the control of the police. The vagrant would turn round to the master and say, "I'll tell the bobby"—(laughter)—and that would never do at all. He was more and more inclined to see in labour colonies the solution of the question.

Mr PEASE (Okehampton) produced the Blue-book containing the Report of the Committee, which, he said, contained the evidence of over fifty witnesses with a special knowledge of questions affecting the vagrant poor, representatives of the Church Army, the Salvation Army, Boards of Guardians, inspectors, and so on, who had been closely questioned as to their opinions. The Committee had also had evidence as to the labour colonies abroad. There was nothing new under the sun, and there was nothing new in labour colonies or the suggested handing over of the vagrants to the police. Those things had been recommended time after time, and considered, but it took them a very long time in this country to come to a conclusion, and a longer time still to act upon it. They had endless Acts of Parliament and Orders in Council for dealing with sturdy vagabonds and valiant beggars and the pitiable condition of the unemployed. The proposal to hand over the tramps to the police authorities had been tried to some extent by making the police officers assistant relieving officers, but that had not been found very satisfactory, and he believed the police generally objected to it. It was said that it was unfair to hand over vagrants, many of whom were so closely allied to the honest unemployed, to a criminal department, but the police force, it should be remembered, was by no means entirely engaged in work relating to crime. The question

arose whether the police were willing to take over that new duty. It was a disagreeable duty, but, on the other hand, it would save them a great deal of petty theft, and in other ways it would work in with their other duties. Short sentences for vagrants were certainly an evil, for many of them really liked short sentences, having various reasons for wishing to be sent to prison for a few days rather than remain in the streets. It was rightly recommended that the first time they should be cautioned, and that after two or three convictions they should be given something they could really feel. Mr Pease concluded by commending to the notice of the Conference Mr Percy Alden's book on the Unemployed Problem.

Mr G. P. GOOCH, junior Member of Parliament for Bath, said that as one who had had rather exceptional opportunities of seeing the penal colonies in most countries where they existed abroad, he found himself in hearty and cordial agreement with every word of Colonel Clayton's paper. The Report was of immense importance. Blue-books had a very bad name among people who did not know anything about them, but those who did know about them knew that there was no more fascinating form of literature. (Laughter.) He had read a good many of them, and it seemed to him that this one on Vagrancy was one of the most useful and coherent and practical Blue-books he had ever read. He would very much like to see it produced in popular form. There was an extraordinary degree of unanimity on the subject. They were all agreed that the existing Poor Law system was utterly and hopelessly incapable of dealing with vagrancy. It appeared to encourage its increase rather than diminish the evil. It was common ground, also, that some form of compulsory detention must be introduced, and the question arose, What form of penal colony were they to adopt, and who was to be in control of that colony? It had been his good fortune to see not only Merxplas, the biggest penal colony in the world, and probably the most efficiently managed, but many others. From the point of view of machinery and management the bigger the colony the cheaper it was and the more efficient, but from point of view of permanent moral reformation and elevation, the bigger the colony the less effect it had. He quite agreed with Colonel Clayton that the Swiss colonies, which were very small, with anything from 100 to 200 inmates, did far more in the way of moral reformation than the large colonies. They might cost a little more money, but the permanent results were a great deal better. He felt very strongly about those penal colonies. Everyone agreed that they must have them for the incorrigible or quasi-incorrigible loafer, but there was a certain difference of opinion, even in the Report, as to the control of them. Some people seemed to think it possible or desirable that some private philanthropic or religious body should be given the task of running one or more of those penal colonies. He ventured to protest against that very strongly indeed. (Hear, hear.) Just at the very moment when the compulsory element was introduced, there the duty of the State to

run the machine came in as clearly as possible. Wherever those penal colonies existed they were under public and not under private or philanthropic control. The management of a private or semi-private society would not win the respect of the men sent to the colony, and there would be insubordination as a result. Under definite public control the atmosphere and discipline of the colony would be stricter. At the same time he quite recognised the tremendous importance of introducing religious influence. In the Belgian, Danish, and other penal colonies that influence was conspicuous by its absence, and that was undoubtedly one of the reasons why the moral results were so extremely poor. He thought it extremely desirable that religious bodies like the Salvation Army and the Church Army should be entrusted with a very large part of the religious and reformatory work of those publicly managed penal colonies. That seemed to be the point where the private or semi-private work could be best introduced. There was another very important point. After a man had been sent to the penal colony and served his sentence, they did not want to send him straight back into the world. That seemed to be one of the greatest errors ordinarily committed by the penal colonies of Belgium. They kept the man there for a minimum of two or a maximum of seven years, and almost the very moment he got back again into the outer world he fell again, and was sent back for another term of detention. One of the most important recommendations of the Report was that there should be some intermediary institution between the penal colony and the return to public life. He was very glad to hear so high a figure as 25 per cent. mentioned for the apparent reforms in the case of the Swiss colony spoken of by Colonel Clayton; but it seemed almost too good to be true. It certainly was not true of colonies in other countries than Switzerland. It seemed to him they needed two colonies of a rather different class from the penal colonies—one, like that at Horsley Bay, to which they might send for a time the man who did exceptionally well in the penal colony. He should like to see the best men have the chance of being found some permanent situation on the land, and in a few cases emigrated. The second additional colony also had an indispensable part to play. It came midway between the penal colony for the incorrigible and the better class colony he had spoken of, and would correspond to the German labour colonies, Lingfield in Surrey, or the Salvation Army colony at Hadleigh in Essex. It was intended to be for men who were weak in body, mind, and character. There were a number of people who were either vagrants, or would very easily become such, or had been such, who were not bad enough to send into a penal colony, or good enough for a place like Horsley Bay. The Germans and Dutch had found that they had to make special provision for these people, and he (Mr Gooch) hoped to see these three classes of colonies working in organic connection with one another, the man doing well in the lowest one being sent up higher, and the man who did badly in the

highest or second class being sent down lower. The question was so large that it must be grasped in that way. They must as far as possible adopt the best machinery to be found in foreign countries at work. If they studied the question as a whole, and introduced the far-reaching plan he had indicated, he had very little doubt that the results would be exceedingly satisfactory. (Cheers.)

Mr S. P. RATTENBURY (Chairman, Launceston) said he came with a particular request from his Board for information as to the police acting as assistant relieving officers for vagrants. In Cornwall that had been done for a great many years without any remuneration, but for some years there had been a difference of opinion among Boards of Guardians, some of whom paid the police extra, while others (including his own Board) refused to give such doles. The chief constable had now issued an order to the police not to relieve vagrants unless they were paid for it. He would like to know what was being done in other counties, for they felt there ought to be some uniformity of action in the matter. (Hear, hear.) At Launceston they thought the police were the proper people to relieve the vagrants.

The PRESIDENT thought Mr Rattenbury was rather wandering from the question.

Mr RATTENBURY added that in his Union the number of tramps was increasing by leaps and bounds, rising from 329 in 1901, to 1,339 in 1905—an increase of 1,100 in four years. This increase of “walking tourists”—(laughter)—was becoming very serious. Personally, he thought the Report hardly went far enough. He would like to see all vagrants over sixty years of age detained in the Workhouses. (A voice: “Old age pensions.”) Work should be found for the *bona-fide* working-man, the children should be cared for, and it should be made a penal offence for a woman to travel with children. He was told about 60 per cent. of the vagrants in his Union were short-service men.

Mr G. C. CARPENTER (Bodmin) said that their Workhouse master had reported that during the six months ending August 31 last, the vagrants received were 283 men, 17 women, and 4 children, the great majority of the men being classified as casual labourers. One of the great sources of vagrancy was the fact that young men were not brought up to any particular kind of employment, and personally he thought their education nowadays was becoming too “bookish.” He wished it could be so altered as to give children while at school a better idea how to earn their living afterwards. More technical instruction in the schools would tend to lessen vagrancy, and in rural districts the children should be trained to take an interest in rural pursuits.

Sir HENRY PETO (Beaminster) moved that the Report and recommendations of the Departmental Committee receive the approval of the Conference. Any satisfactory system for dealing with vagrancy must first be national, and local action would not suffice. Discipline must be uniform, whereas now it was varied and lax.

The police would be a much better body to carry out the system than the Poor Law authorities. It was all important to get first touch with the vagrant, then there might be some hope of reclamation, but if the man once took to a vagrant life he was just like a poacher—the charm of the occupation would keep him to the road just as the poacher was kept to his snare. He also thought the Standing Joint-Committee would be a far better body than Guardians to deal with the question.

Miss JOSEPH (Williton) seconded, saying that the results of labour colonies abroad certainly justified an experiment at home.

Mr PRESTON THOMAS (Local Government Board Inspector) thought the discussion had been far more profitable than that on the previous day. He knew of nothing which had worried Boards of Guardians more than the perpetual tramp problem. Everyone agreed as to the need of uniformity, but could they possibly get uniformity when they had some 600 or 700 Boards of Guardians in all parts dealing not only with their own residents but with people coming into their Unions for various purposes, generally for more or less veiled purposes of begging? Was not the tramp more a police nuisance than a Poor Law nuisance? (Hear, hear.) Absolute uniformity might not be possible even under the police, but a nearer approach to it might reasonably be secured. The Swiss labour colonies seemed more successful than any others, and that at Witzwyl had the advantage of an extraordinarily good organiser and excellent workers. It was very difficult to say just what reform was in the case of the men sent to such colonies, and when after a year or eighteen months' detention a man showed signs of industry, one could hardly say to what extent he was reformed if his old temptations returned. They could, however, say this, and this was what experience showed, that a comparatively small number came back again, and that was a considerable test. If it was true that 25 per cent. were substantially reformed, that was evidence of an amount of success which none of their voluntary colonies could claim. He recognised the admirable rescue work done by the Salvation Army and the Church Army, but that was very different from saying either of those bodies ought to be entrusted with police powers and made gaolers for the detention of prisoners. He would introduce into the colonies as many reforming influences as possible, but powers of detention ought to be reserved by the State—(cheers)—and not handed over to philanthropic bodies. If the "work shy" was made to work for eighteen months, it was quite possible he might think it as well to work for himself as for the State. At any rate, powers of labour were being utilised and not thrown away.

In reply to the President, Mr THOMAS explained that when the Witzwyl authorities spoke of 25 per cent., or more, of reformed characters, they meant that these did not return to the colony again after discharge, and that they would have been sent back had they continued in their old habits.

Mr W. S. PRICE (Clerk, Wellington) spoke in favour of the way-ticket system, as securing for the *bona-fide* workman or unfortunate wayfarer freedom from ill-treatment, and thus meeting the demands of humanitarians. It was a question how far the vagrant could be redeemed and made a useful citizen, but the experiments abroad seemed to show that a large amount of good could be done. There were, of course, drawbacks in the Report, and one was the bugbear of dual control. Personally, he felt that Guardians were the proper relieving authority for tramps as well as for other persons in want of help. Police supervision in penal wards ought not to interfere with the Guardians' prerogative of relief. He feared that dual control would eventually lead to friction. He could not approve of the admission of female vagrants into the Workhouse wards, for they were among the worst class of women, and it did not seem wise to let them associate with the respectable women who were inmates of the Workhouses.

Mr W. H. HEATH (Newton-Abbot) said his Board had made special investigations into the statement that there were many honest tramps, and sought to separate the deserving from the rest. If they found an honest man they intended to give him work, but he did not think they found one in six months—(laughter)—for in the few cases where the names of employers were given the inquiry forms were not returned. The generosity of the public was a great evil, for if people would not give tramps food by day the Workhouses would not get them at night. They had men in their Workhouse who said they never had worked, and they never intended to.

Mr J. S. DURVY (Clerk, Clutton) said it was the fashion to advocate depriving Guardians of their powers and handing them over to someone else—no matter to whom—but Poor Law administrators were not in favour of that course. The Guardians knew the work, and could do it, and he saw no reason why it should be taken from them. Why should the police do better than they with vagrants? The police were not experienced in controlling institutions, and they were. The police never tried to reclaim anyone—(laughter)—and he thought that the Poor Law authorities did. He prophesied expensive schemes for small vagrant wards if the Joint-Committees had control. Vagrants had existed for all time, and would exist till time should be no more, but still it was their duty to try to reclaim them. The actual cost of labour colonies would probably not be greater than the present expense of maintaining men who lived by preying on society.

Rev. W. H. CHILD (Plymouth) amused the Conference by posing as "devil's advocate" and defending the tramp. The vagrant, no doubt, was a very uninteresting person, and a nuisance to Guardians, magistrates, and police, but he (the speaker) sympathised with him, for he was a vagrant himself—(laughter)—and knew the joys and pleasures of the life. He resembled the vagrant in every respect, save that he did not beg, steal, or sleep in casual wards. (Laughter.)

Vagrancy was really a matter of opportunity and circumstances. There were vagrants in all classes, and he considered the gentleman who went from John o' Groats to Land's End in a motor car quite as much a vagrant as the gentleman who walked on foot. (Laughter.) Possibly the motorist was more dangerous and a greater nuisance. (Laughter and cheers.) The vagrant was perhaps more sinned against than sinning. Many, no doubt, were vagrants because they liked the life. A young girl who had spent a year in a Home at Plymouth, and whose parents had been vagrants, was asked what life she would prefer, and said she wished to go on the road, because there were such beautiful blackberries, and apples, and the farmers were so kind in giving them a place to sleep in. It was the nomadic instinct coming out. That was why so many ex-soldiers became vagrants. The same primary instinct that led a man to become a soldier afterwards induced him to become a wanderer. It was in his constitution—he could not help himself. For the indiscriminate charity which encouraged vagrancy the labouring class was mostly to blame, for vagrants got more out of them than out of any other class. The other day he promised a tramp in Plymouth sixpence on condition that he gave an honest answer to a question. The man said he would so, and he then asked him, "Don't you honestly think I'm a fool to give you this sixpence?" (Laughter.) The tramp was a humorous man, and he laughed heartily. "Well, sir," he replied, "if there were no fools in the world we should not get on very well." (Loud laughter.)

Mr MUSGRAVE (Taunton) moved as a rider to the resolution the addition of the words "except as to the provision of labour colonies, which this Conference considers should be provided by the Government." The mover explained that he objected to the provision of labour colonies being left to county and borough councils or philanthropic agencies.

Mr DURV moved as an amendment that the Conference considered that to put vagrants under the control of the police would cause unnecessary expenditure in salaries and buildings; that the general plan recommended could be carried out efficiently by giving the police and the Workhouse officials power to take vagrants before a Petty Sessional Court to be dealt with by the magistrates, and that assistant relieving officers should be in all cases police officers. "With the necessary changes consequent on these suggestions," concluded the amendment, "the Conference trusts that the recommendations of the Committee will be speedily carried into effect."

This amendment was lost by a large majority, its supporters numbering 18.

Sir HENRY PETO proposed to vary his motion by expressing approval of the Committee's recommendations generally, but adding that labour colonies should be under either State or County Council control.

An amendment suggesting that the police should have powers of

supervision and inspection of Workhouse vagrant wards, but not control of them, was lost by 41 to 34, and a separate amendment declaring against county councils having power to provide penal colonies was carried by 60 to 1.

Ultimately Sir Henry Peto's motion was put in the following form, and carried, *nem. con.*:—

"That this Conference approves of the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on vagrancy, but considers that in respect of labour colonies they ought to be exclusively under State control."

BUSINESS.

The Hon. SECRETARY read the Annual Report of the Standing Committee, which was as follows:—

REPORT OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE.

The number of Unions represented (58) shows an increase of 12, and the number of delegates (140) an increase of 13 over last year. This year's figures are the highest ever recorded, and it is satisfactory to note that on this occasion the Unions represented are very evenly distributed throughout the five counties. The Committee trust that the Annual Conference has now taken firm root in the district, and that the Boards of Guardians are becoming more and more convinced of its value.

After paying all the expenses of the Plymouth Conference a balance of £4. 16s. 7d. remained in the Hon. Treasurer's hands. This sum was less by £2. 10s. than the year before; but the decrease, being due to some unusual items of expenditure, gives no cause for anxiety.

Early in this year the Committee sent to every Board in the district a request for suggestions as to subjects for discussion at the present Conference, together with names of persons willing to read papers or to speak on such subjects. A large number of suggestions were received, and they proved a great help in the settlement of the Conference programme.

Though for various reasons it was not possible for the Committee to avail themselves of all the offers to read papers or to speak which were made to them, they are none the less grateful to those who were so kindly willing to place their knowledge and experience at the disposal of the Conference.

One Board (Barnstaple) declined to appoint delegates, on the ground that compliance with the requirement of the Local Government Board, that notice of a resolution to pay for the admission of delegates must be sent by post to every Guardian, would cost more than the five shillings charged for admission. The Committee are informed that it is the practice of the District Auditors, or some of them, to disallow the payment of 5s. for the admission of delegates

where the formal notice required by the Local Government Board has not been given. This practice evidently tends to diminish the attendance of Guardians at the Conferences, and the Committee accordingly recommend that the Conference should draw the attention of the Local Government Board to the difficulty, and request that arrangements may be made for its adjustment.

The Committee also recommend that this matter be brought to the notice of the Committee of the Central Poor Law Conferences.

The attention of the Committee has been called to the series of resolutions passed by the Wellington Board of Guardians, urging the amendment of the Workmen's Compensation Act, 1897, with a view to enabling Boards of Guardians, in the case of pauper workmen, to make claims for compensation, and to take steps for setting aside compositions between employer and workman, where such workman is prejudiced, and for the annulling of agreements between employers and workmen for the payment of a lump sum in lieu of further compensation.

The Committee suggest that this subject might profitably be discussed at next year's Conference. The Committee have to record, with great regret, the recent death of one of their number, Mr J. Clark Isaac, formerly Vice-Chairman of the Liskeard Board of Guardians, and a member of the Committee since 1903.

Lastly, the Committee desire to express their gratitude to the Local Hon. Secretary and the Local Committee for the very great assistance they have rendered in making the arrangements for the Conference.

The Report was adopted on the motion of the PRESIDENT, seconded by Sir HENRY PETO.

The election of the Committee of the Conference was then proceeded with, the Committee as elected being constituted as follows :—
Cornwall—Mr E. B. Beauchamp, Mrs T. Robins Bolitho, Rev. W. E. Graves, Rev. R. J. Roe. Devon—Mr R. Breal, Mr J. Campfield, Mr F. Underhill, Mr J. C. Wills. Dorset—Mrs Holford, Mr J. L. Kitson, Rev. F. Williams, Mr J. Wyatt. Somerset—Col. Clayton, Mrs A. Coode, Miss Joseph, Mr W. Sydney Price. Wilts—Mr Robert Butler, Mrs Fuller, Mr W. C. Keevil; Blanche, Lady Pelly.

On the motion of the President, Mr A. G. Ferrers Howell was unanimously re-elected Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

The President, Mrs Fuller, and the Hon. Secretary were chosen as delegates to represent the Conference on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

VOTES OF THANKS.

The PRESIDENT said it was his duty, and he did it without any preface, for it needed no argument to support it, to move that the members of the Conference heartily thank the Mayor of Bath for his

kindness in opening the proceedings, and granting the use of the Guildhall—one of the best rooms they had ever met in ; the Mayor and Mayoress for their hospitality the previous evening ; and the Rev. J. Roland Davis and the Local Committee for their hospitality and for making the arrangements. He was very glad to associate himself with the motion. He was sure thanks were never better deserved. (Cheers.)

Mr BREALY seconded, saying that at no Conference had they had better accommodation or better arrangements.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

The Rev. ROLAND DAVIS moved a vote of thanks to the President, who, he said, conferred distinction on the Conference.

Colonel CLAYTON seconded, acknowledging the President's efficiency and courtesy in the chair.

The PRESIDENT, responding, said it was a great pleasure to him to attend. They had never had a more pleasant Conference. He thought they had had a very lively Conference, and he was very glad indeed to see the Conference growing in efficiency and influence. He had not the slightest doubt that the time spent on it, and the exertions made to promote it, were very well employed. He wished the Conference all success, and hoped, if he lived, to serve it for some time to come. (Cheers.)

The Conference then dispersed.

Yorkshire District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE YORKSHIRE DISTRICT, HELD IN THE CHURCH
INSTITUTE, LEEDS, ON THE 29TH NOVEMBER
1906.

President—Mr ARTHUR WILLEY,
Chairman, Leeds Board of Guardians.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

BARNSELY—

Bamforth, Wm. T.
Marshall, H.
Lang, Thomas.
Littlewood, James.

BRADFORD—

Bentham, F. H. (Chairman).
Cawley, Charlotte E.
Greenwood, Isabel.
Walker, Geo.
Crowther, Geo. M. (Clerk).

BRAMLEY—

Goodson, James.
Burdakin, W.
Hardwick, W. H. Lee.
Clayton, J. E.

BRIDLINGTON—

Wardill, Chas. H.
Greame, G. G. Lloyd.

DEWSBURY—

Taylor, Mrs.
Thornton, Mrs.
Nussey, J. I.
Peace, J. (Clerk).

ECCLESALL BIERLOW—

Haste, Rev. Alfred G.
Whitworth, R. S.
Smith, Thomas (Clerk).

GOOLE—

Beachell, W., J. P.
Huntingdon, John, J. P.
England, Geo. (Clerk).

HALIFAX—

Quarmby, Mr (Vice-Chairman).
Pinder, Mr.
Tillotson, Mr.
Hodgson, Mr.

HOLBECK—

Garnett, Robt.
Bannister, Arthur.
Robinson, James.
Moore, J. B. (Clerk).

HUDDERSFIELD—

Mallinson, Thos. (Chairman).
Siddon, Miss.
Taylor, T.
Whitwam, Eli.
Butterfield, Wm.
Rigby, E. A. (Clerk).

Unions represented at the Conference—*continued*.**HUNSLET—**

Knight, Reginald R. (Chairman).
Green, Edward (Vice-Chairman).
Park, T.
Hollings, W.
Shaw, A.
Mee, F. W. (Clerk).

KEIGHLEY—

Foster, Mrs S. A.
Bottomley, Henry.
Harrison, W.
Hopkinson, M.
Spencer, Geo. E. (Clerk).

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL—

Hunter, J. B. (Governor).
Slater, W. D. (Deputy-Governor).
Gower, S. J.
Winter, R. H. (Clerk).

KNARESBOROUGH—

Gelder, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
Kelly, J.
Rainforth, J.
Smith, James (Clerk).

LEEDS—

Willey, Arthur (Chairman).
Baines, Margaret.
Vine, J. W.
Hodgson, J.
Bucklow, J. T.
Terry, Ernest.
Corker, Alf.
Edmanson, A.
Wilson, Butler.
Moorhouse, Helen L.
Stow, A. E.
Eddison, A.
Roberts, B.
Wainwright, Walter.
Sturdy, John.
Bradley, Joseph.
Rider, Thomas.
Dodgson, Jane.
Richardson, J.
Ford, J. H. (Clerk).

NORTH BIERLEY—

Stockwell, O. T. (Chairman).
Mortimer, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
Hainsworth, Henry.
Roberts, N. S.
Hardisty, John.
Helmsley, J. E. (Clerk).

PONTEFRAC—

Thornton, W.
Earnshaw, Sam.
Shepherd, F. E.
Amies, T. J. (Clerk).

ROTHERHAM—

Winterbottom, John B.
Featherstone, Samuel.
Harrison, W. C. (Clerk).

SCULCOATES—

Savage, James (Chairman).
Elvin, J. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Bulay, W. W.
Lilley, G. W.
Wild, J. H. (Clerk).

SETTLE—

Swale, C. A. S.
Pearson, T. E. (Clerk).

SHEFFIELD—

Darby, John.
Foster, Thomas.
Booker, A. E. (Clerk).

SKIPTON—

Slater, Sam.
Garnett, Richard.
Knowles, M. R. (Clerk).

TADCASTER—

Greenwood, Rev. Canon.
Field, Rev. Arthur F.
Blackburn, J. W.

WAKEFIELD—

Taylor, Benjamin (Chairman).
Race, Wm. Thos.
Thornton, Helen.
Brownrigg, Rev. Henry.
Beaumont, H. (Clerk).

WETHERBY—

Boyd, S.

WHARFEDALE—

Peate, Jonathan (Chairman).

YORK—

Russell, Geo. J.
Sykes, Geo. (Clerk).

VISITORS.

Right Hon. Joseph Hepworth, Lord Mayor of Leeds.

P. H. Bagenal, Esq., Local Government Board Inspector.

The following Unions were not represented at the Conference :—Aysgarth, Bedale, Beverley, Doncaster, Driffild, Easingwold, Great Ouseburn, Guisborough, Helmsley, Hemsworth, Howden, Kirkby Moorside, Leyburn, Malton, Middlesbrough, Northallerton, Pateley Bridge, Patrington, Penistone, Pickering, Pocklington, Reeth, Richmond, Ripon, Saddleworth, Scarborough, Sedbergh, Selby, Skirlaugh, Stokesley, Thirsk, Thorne, Todmorden, Whitby, Wortley.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
CARE OF THE BLIND POOR. By Mr W. H. TATE, <i>Member of the Committee of the Bradford Institution for the Blind</i> -	486
A FACTOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF PAUPERISM. By Dr JAMES ALLAN, <i>Medical Superintendent, Union Infirmary, Leeds</i> -	480
THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VAGRANCY COMMITTEE. By Mr E. A. RIGBY, <i>Clerk to the Guardians, Huddersfield</i> -	509

THURSDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER 1906.

THE LORD MAYOR'S WELCOME.

THE LORD MAYOR OF LEEDS (Mr Joseph Hepworth), who wore his chain of office, extended to the Delegates a hearty welcome to what he described as the great and renowned city of Leeds—one of the finest cities in the kingdom. It was, he said, twenty-five years ago that he was a member of the Leeds Board of Guardians. Great progress had been made since then, and, in his opinion, Guardians did a lot of good work, so that a Mayor could not do less than welcome the administrators of the Poor Law when they came on a visit to the city. (Hear, hear.) Speaking of a subject which, he said, had occupied his attention for something like thirty years, he said he had wondered how the law of settlement could be improved. That law, as at present administered, took one back to the time of Queen Elizabeth. As Guardians they should agitate on this question, because under the present circumstances it gave a great deal of work to lawyers, and cost money which the ratepayers had to provide. Proceeding, he said, that Guardians should always remember that they had not only to consider the poor inside, but the poor outside, the Workhouse. They were Guardians of the public purse as well as of the people committed to their care. (Applause.) It was all very well, he said, to have large palatial buildings—comfortable homes were reasonable and necessary—but he did not think Guardians should go further than that. He instanced the case of Sheffield, where, thirty years ago, a Workhouse was built, on which

the Guardians would have to pay 3 per cent. for ever. That was a serious thing. He was almost certain that in the near future the Government would bring in a Bill to give pensions to the people. (Applause.) Guardians should have this in mind before they spent much more money on Workhouses. (Hear, hear.)

The PRESIDENT (Mr Arthur Willey) then delivered his address. He emphasised at the outset the importance of local conferences of this kind as being more useful in their way than some of the larger and more general conferences which were sometimes held in the Metropolis. By their unity Guardians were enabled to place their grievances—and they had many—before the powers that be. He commented with pleasure upon the fact that Mr Bentham, the Chairman of the Bradford Board of Guardians, had been appointed a member of the Poor Law Commission, and added that it was with particular satisfaction that they had in their midst that day Mr Bagenal, the Local Government Board Inspector for the district. (Applause.)

Proceeding to make a few suggestions for the consideration of the Poor Law Commission, he said it was not by any means the first Commission of the kind which had been held in this country to deal with the intricate questions which confronted Guardians from day to day. There never was, he said, in the history of Poor Law more necessity for such a commission as was now sitting, and more necessity for reforms of the kind which Guardians had been trying to obtain for many years past.

The first question, proceeded the President, to which the Commission might give their strict attention, is that of the codification of the laws which pertain to our particular functions. Speaking as a lawyer, I can liken the Poor Law to no other branch of statute law in this country in its contradictory intricacies, the innumerable orders and statutes and so-called articles which we have to obey. This is not a new grievance of ours. Dr Burn wrote a history of the Poor Law one hundred and thirty years ago. He was looked upon not only as a great lawyer, but as a man of great experience in Poor Law matters. Dr Burn said: "If it may be reasonable to advance further still in speculations, perhaps a day may come when it shall be thought convenient to reduce all the Poor Laws into one. The laws concerning the poor may not improperly be compared to their apparel. When a flaw is observed a patch is provided for it, upon that another, and so on, until the original coat is lost amidst a variety of patchwork, and more labour and materials are expended, besides the clumsiness of motley figures, than would have made an entirely new suit." (Applause.) We are, continued the President, in the same position to-day as Dr Burn was one hundred and thirty years ago. Only, unfortunately, the difficulties are worse to-day than then. Since that time no fewer than one hundred and thirty-seven statutory enactments have been passed dealing with the administration of the Poor Law, the greater number of which have been passed since 1834, and, therefore,

I do hope, speaking I think with your full concurrence, that this Commission will at least do one thing in the direction suggested by Dr Burn in the year 1760. Let us have a codification of the Poor Law in its entirety, so that our unfortunate Clerks, and, indeed, our unfortunate selves, may know exactly what it is that we have to obey. We are all alive, of course, to the fact that we are dealing to-day with a very different state of things to that which existed fifty years ago, and indeed we read that the necessity of dealing with the Poor Law has existed from the time of Athelstan and the Norman Conquest; and probably rather too vigorous efforts have since been made to deal with what—I will not call a necessary evil, but with a state of affairs which, whatever Government may be in power, will always exercise the minds of the public in some form or another, namely, distress and sickness amongst the indigent poor. Our forefathers did not deal with it in the same spirit of friendliness and generosity or magnanimity as we deal with it at the present time. The tendency of the day is one of expansion in the treatment of the poor. I hope it will be the tendency in the other direction in treating with the class of the undeserving poor, a large proportion of which come before us from time to time. I daresay some of you know for instance, that so far back as the year 1500 the method of dealing with the poor was most significant. Anybody who wanted to be a poor person could be made so by Act of Parliament. All that he had to do was to take out a license, and he had to get his relief as best he could under a license by begging in the streets. His license confined him to a particular locality, and if he poached on the preserves of anybody else he had to be whipped and put in the stocks for three days. (Laughter.) If he had not a certificate, he had to be kept at the country's expense for three days rather than at the charge of the individual who, in the ordinary circumstances, would have been good enough to give him something. Even ten years after that the method of raising the Poor Rate was rather novel. They did not send out a demand note in these days. In 1535 the churchwardens and parsons had to procure charitable alms by means of boxes every Sunday, and other festivals to collect for the poor. Every preacher, parson, vicar or curate, in his sermons and at the time of making wills, exhorted people to be liberal. I am not so sure, said Mr Willey, that there was not a good deal of common-sense in that method, but I am afraid our reverend gentlemen of the cloth have other and multifarious duties to perform—I won't say more or less of a selfish character—rather than looking after the general poor. These innumerable statutory enactments have been passed from time to time, and, speaking as a lawyer, I say that they have placed us in a most ambiguous position. The question of Old Age Pensions has been mentioned, but there is one insurmountable difficulty in providing at the country's expense pensions for the aged, and that is the absolute impossibility of drawing a line of demarcation

between the deserving and the undeserving poor. If this great State system has to come into operation, everybody will have to be treated alike, regardless of their past. I hope, personally, that the day is far distant when undeserving persons will have to be kept, even to a small extent, as a matter of right, under an Act of Parliament at the public expense. When we are told that such a scheme, involving merely the payment of 5s. a week to each person over the age limit, would cost the country between 100 and 120 millions a year, I venture to say that we shall pause as Poor Law Guardians before we lend our support to it. I see by this morning's paper that at the present moment the country is giving between thirteen and fourteen millions per year to the relief of the poor. Those are appalling figures, and there is no question that, although we have by law to spend this money, the obligation placed upon us to deal with it as economically as possible is very great.

Another suggestion I should like to make to the Commission—and I speak with bated breath in the presence of the Local Government Board Inspector—(laughter)—is that they might well pay a little attention to relieving that all important Department, the Local Government Board, of a number of detailed powers which might very well be left to the common-sense and discretion of people like ourselves, who after all are elected by the public to represent their interests. I feel that we are in an anomalous position compared with other large bodies with equal powers and elected upon the same principle of public representation. I happen to be a member of a County Council, but I have always said that, from the point of view of work, the Poor Law Guardian is of equal importance with the County Councillor or the Urban Councillor. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, I ask myself: Why are we strapped down in every department of our work, and made subservient to what may be called a political Department—for the head of the Department changes from time to time in accordance with the change of political power? I agree that there are some questions which can safely and properly and rightly be left to their better judgment or approval. I am not here to suggest that the Local Government Board, hitherto the Poor Law Board, should be abolished. Far from it. Leave in their hands, for instance, the large questions concerning the erection of buildings and the spending of large sums of money. But, for heaven's sake, let the Guardians have complete power to appoint, say, an under-housemaid. Don't let us have to go through all the rigmarole of sending up to the Local Government Board documents for the apprenticeships of pauper boys, or the taking of a house at 5s. a week to keep a few children in, or the payment of a cab-fare, the purchase of a conveyance, and the innumerable other foolishly detailed matters. It is an insult to any body of ladies and gentlemen who are elected by the popular vote, that they should have these matters of detail criticised and even vetoed by a Government Department. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, I hope that the powers of the Local Government Board

in questions of this kind will be curtailed, reserving, however, on the recommendation of the Poor Law Commission, those larger questions in respect of which we are glad to have their advice.

And then there is another question to which the attention of the Poor Law Commission might be given, and that is Lunacy. The law makes us responsible as payers for the maintenance of pauper lunatics, and also to a substantial extent of weak-minded persons who are not lunatics. But though Guardians are responsible, they have no voice in the management of the institutions which they maintain and pay for, and into which, as is the case with Leeds, we send very nearly a thousand patients. We spend upon these people between £20,000 and £30,000 a year, and all we can do is to see these poor people once every six weeks, and then report to the Local Government Board that we find them all well and happy. (Laughter.) Seeing that we support these institutions we should have a voice in the management of them, and, speaking personally and strongly, I say that if we cannot get those powers from the Local Government Board or from Parliament, it would behove the larger Unions to join hands in this matter and get some power whereby we can erect for ourselves similar institutions, and place into them the unfortunate people for whom we are directly responsible.

Connected with this subject is the important one of the treatment of epileptics. These unfortunate people are not imbeciles, nor lunatics. Their attacks are occasional and intermittent, but by virtue of this horrible proclivity of theirs they are made to associate with irresponsible people. At the present time, unless you go to the expense of providing a home exclusively for them at very great expense, there is no accommodation in up-to-date Workhouses for them; and in my opinion it is nothing short of cruelty to place the ordinary epileptic with the imbeciles, and it is equally cruel to associate him with the able-bodied inmates of a Workhouse. It is just as much the duty of Parliament to permit the erection of homes for this unfortunate class as it is to permit the provision of homes for the inebriate, whose position may be due entirely to his or her own profligacy and excesses. I hope the Commission will deal with this question in a generous and broad spirit, and that before they conclude their Report they will tap every source of information in order that they may come to a wise decision.

In conclusion, I would like to say a few words as to the work which ladies do in the administration of the Poor Law. Although a large number of us do not approve of the methods that are being pursued by certain of their sex to attain prominence in public life—(laughter)—I can only speak of my lady friends as I find them on the Leeds Board. I desire to say that I find them not only useful but indispensable colleagues. There is appropriate work for ladies to do, work which men, speaking of them for the moment as the weaker sex—(laughter)—are not able to do with the same proficiency. The three ladies I have the honour to be associated with give us most

valuable assistance, and we are able to leave in their hands matters which we, as men, know nothing about ourselves, or, at any rate, that we don't admit we know anything about. (Laughter.) And those matters which are entrusted to them are performed in the most proficient manner. (Applause.)

Dr JAMES ALLAN (Leeds) read the following paper :—

A FACTOR IN THE PRODUCTION OF PAUPERISM.

BY DR JAMES ALLAN,

Medical Superintendent, Leeds Union Infirmary, Leeds.

IN my annual report on the Leeds Union Infirmary for the year 1886, it is noted that during the year 1886 119 cases of acute venereal diseases had been admitted, or one-fifteenth of the total number of admissions. The report goes on to say, "There is no public provision other than the Workhouse for the treatment of such cases in Leeds. Smallpox excites panic almost in a community, but its ravages are confined to the individuals affected; venereal diseases produce directly and indirectly more paupers sane and insane than is generally known, and being transmitted cause much crippling and mortality in the second generation."

My subsequent twenty years' experience amongst the indoor poor leads me to confirm the opinion above expressed as to the importance of these diseases in the causation of pauperism.

As an attempt is now being made by the Royal Commission on Poor Law to determine with accuracy the causes of pauperism, it occurred to me when asked to read a paper before this Poor Law Conference that, as no list of causes would be complete that did not give a somewhat prominent place to venereal disease, a few notes on this subject would be opportune.

I do not deal with the ordinary inmates of the

Workhouse, I have no doubt an examination of them would show much premature debility and incapacity for work to arise from this source; my notes refer to infirmary inmates.

Patients in a Poor Law infirmary on account of these affections are suffering either from the recently acquired diseases or from the more or less remote results of it.

There is this peculiarity about the diseases in question, viz., that without careful and prolonged treatment, and not infrequently in spite of such treatment, certain serious diseased states of many parts of the body ensue at irregular, often long, intervals after infection.

Very often patients having got over the local and more immediate effects of the complaint, and in ignorance of, or carelessness as to the grave possibilities of their condition, do not trouble to pursue the treatment for an adequate period.

(A.) Inmates suffering from the recent diseases.

During the past twenty-five years the number of inmates treated in the Leeds Union Infirmary for early venereal disease has been fairly constant, 120 to 140 cases annually, and an average of 16 to 20 at any one time under treatment.

On admission many of them are in a very bad state, having come into the Workhouse as a last resource when their condition compelled them, and having been patched up they do not stay, but discharge themselves long before they have had sufficient treatment.

Such people are a public danger before admission and continue to be so after their discharge.

The State takes upon itself the duty of protecting the public against smallpox, plague, anthrax, &c., but has not made any serious attempt to grapple with this most serious disease.

If the community were fully alive to its responsibility

in this matter, some public provision for treatment other than the Workhouse should be available.

Here it may be noted that the Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration in its report in 1904, recommended the appointment of a Commission of Inquiry into the prevalence and effects of syphilis, having special regard to the possibility of making the disease notifiable, and to the adequacy of hospital accommodation for its treatment.

(B.) Inmates suffering from the more or less remote effects of the disease.

Many more are pauperised by the later effects of these diseases. They include sufferers from—

(1.) Ulcerated legs.

(2.) Various nervous diseases—

Insanity, epilepsy, locomotor ataxia, and other forms of paralysis. Blindness, deafness.

(3.) Diseases of bone.

(4.) Heart disease, and diseases of arteries.

(5.) Stricture, and consequent kidney disease and hernia.

An analysis of the cases of 550 adult inmates resident at the time of examination, 300 men and 250 women, shows that of the men 85, and of the women 64, were patients on account of some sequel of venereal disease.

Cases of this description are often chronic and incurable, and so tend to accumulate in a Poor-Law infirmary.

From an examination of the notes of 560 consecutive adult male admissions, it was found that of that number 242 had suffered from these diseases. Married people thus affected are comparatively sterile, or at any rate rear only a small proportion of their offspring to maturity. I have full particulars of the family

history of 50 married men, and of 50 married women, in the above series of 550 resident inmates. The 50 men had 193 children, of whom 85 lived to maturity, the 50 women had 250 children, but of this number only 53 lived to grow up.

It may be noted that of the 300 males examined, 16 had become diseased while in the army, and appear to have been under treatment for the primary disease for much too short a period.

VENEREAL DISEASE AS A CAUSE OF INSANITY.

The Inter-Departmental Committee on Physical Degeneration took evidence of experts on this point.

In reply to a question as to the diseases produced by syphilis, Sir Alfred Cooper said: "I should place insanity as almost one of the first things. It is responsible for a large proportion of the cases of lunacy and idiocy in our asylums." Dr Mott, Pathologist to the London County Council Asylums, when questioned on the relation of syphilis to insanity, said that it was the cause in between 25 and 40 per cent. of the men admitted; so far as the increase of insanity is due to general paralysis, he attributed it to syphilis. In 80 per cent. of general paralytics, a history of syphilis can be got.

In a recent Annual Report of the Lunacy Commissioners, venereal disease is given as the cause of insanity in 4.2 per cent. of the men, and .9 per cent. of the women.

I have no definite figures on this point, but am of opinion, after a considerable experience in lunacy cases, that the percentages given by the Commission in Lunacy are much too low.

DISCUSSION.

Dr ALLAN added that some supervision should be exercised by Town Councils through the medical officers. He thought that the present system of treatment in Workhouse hospitals was altogether inadequate. One did not, of course, have much sympathy with the individual in this matter, but, he continued, "we must take into account the innocent people who become affected, innocent mothers, and helpless infants." He had had acute cases of servants from private houses, where presumably their employers knew nothing about it. Medical men appreciated the magnitude of this evil, and, perhaps, his was only another voice crying in the wilderness.

Dr SAVAGE (Sculcoates) said that there was a great lack of knowledge on this matter on the part of what he might call the laity. He often had people applying for out-relief, suffering from what was described as ulcerated leg. A few questions, however, usually satisfied him as to the cause of it, viz., early piety. It would be a good thing if Guardians would only realise that it was a "penny wise and pound foolish" policy to give such men out-relief. Cases of this kind ought to be kept in the infirmary wards until such time as they were rendered immune from the disease. "But my Board," he added, "are only too ready to say: 'Why should we do that? It is much cheaper to give them 5s. a week, and get rid of them.'" And so, as Dr Allan had pointed out, diseased persons were cast upon the world as a menace to healthy people. The paper would bear reading over quietly. It might be the means of Guardians taking more notice of one of the greatest scourges of the country, next to drink.

Dr H. R. KNIGHT (Hunslet) gave it as his firm opinion that venereal disease should be made notifiable, and that lock hospitals should be provided. The number of persons who suffered from this disease at an early age was remarkable. Only last week fifteen applications were made for admission to the Hunslet Workhouse Infirmary.

Mr S. J. GOWER (Hull) alluded to the existence of quack doctors who treated cases of venereal disease in the early stages. When a young person contracted the disease, he at once ran to some quack doctor up a back street, and was improperly treated. He fully agreed that the disease should be made notifiable and brought properly within the purview of the medical profession, so that in time it might be got under better control. With so many medical herbalists having cases in their hands, men were allowed to wander at large, and so spread the disease.

Mr G. W. LILLEY (Sculcoates) asked the Delegates not to run away with the idea that notification was going to stamp out the disease. The fact was that such a course would be likely to do more harm than good. It was a delicate question, and if a young man thought by consulting a medical man he ran the risk of notifica-

tion he would be more reticent than ever. We, however, saw less of the ravages of this disease now than in times gone by.

Mr E. TERRY (Leeds) said it was clearly their duty to protect the public in this matter. Not only ought the disease to be notifiable, but it should be a penal offence to neglect notification. Indeed, he would go further and say that medical officers ought to have the power to detain patients until they were immune from the disease. Then they might be turned into society with perfect safety. The difficulty was that these people, immediately they had got over the most serious symptoms, got themselves discharged, although they knew that the disease was not cured. They were thus as great a danger to society as ever, and medical men ought to insist that they should not leave.

Mr P. H. BAGENAL (Local Government Board Inspector)—They have the power now.

Mr TERRY—Then it is clearly their duty to act upon it more strictly than they do.

Mr H. BEAUMONT (Wakefield) said they had been talking a lot about cure. But was not prevention better. Some years ago a serious attempt was made to deal with this matter, and he made no comment upon it except this, that the prudes of the country required these Acts to be repealed.

The PRESIDENT congratulated Dr Allan on having the courage to tackle this question. In regard to Leeds, they were tackling the subject as best they could, by providing in their new infirmary separate isolated blocks for the exclusive treatment of this class of disease. The second point would be to deal with the question of nursing, as to which there had been many complaints in the past, as a large number of the staff looked upon the matter as distasteful. The time was not far distant, he hoped, when in Leeds their separate isolated blocks would be complete, and that they would have a proper method of nursing. The suggested power of detention, or the power to compel these people to go into the house, applied with equal force to a number of other diseases, including phthisis. As regarded the disease dealt with in the paper, the Leeds Public Infirmary refused to treat persons suffering from it, and the whole of the work rested upon the Workhouse Infirmary.

Dr ALLAN, in replying on the discussion, said that this matter was brought before the Physical Deterioration Committee, who dealt with the two points of inquiry and notification. One paragraph in the Report stated that the moment was ripe for a searching and exhaustive investigation into the extent of the malady and for a definite pronouncement on the steps that should be taken in arresting its progress and counteracting its effects as to notification. The Committee declined to express a definite opinion on so delicate a subject as notification, although they thought the evidence in favour had great weight. As to persons suffering from the disease falling into the hands of quacks, that was a very grievous topic, of course. Medical men could not

mention it without having stones thrown at them. But there was no doubt that many sufferers from shame and other reasons were treated after a fashion by quacks. The treatment was not good, or sufficient if it were good. In Leeds the disease was still rife, and the number of admissions during the last fortnight was astonishing. He thought with Mr Terry that it should be a criminal offence to communicate this disease. As to the power to detain a patient, he was not aware that such power existed in spite of what the Inspector said. People fell into this trouble from want of knowledge, and if the dangers of it were better known, that would be one step towards its diminution. "You can never," he said, "get away from alcohol in dealing with this disease. It is not confined to single people, and many fall into the trouble under the influence of drink."

Mr J. H. FORD (Clerk to the Leeds Guardians) said there was no doubt that Guardians had the power to detain cases of infectious disease, but he did not know whether the power extended to contagious disease. Probably Dr Allan was drawing a distinction between the two.

Mr WILLIAM H. TATE (Bradford) then read the following paper:—

THE CARE OF THE BLIND POOR.

BY MR WILLIAM H. TATE,

A Member of the Committee of the Bradford Institution for the Blind.

THE care of the blind poor has been recognised as a public duty in this country for more than three hundred years; and from time to time, especially during the past fifty years, numerous provisions have been made to further the comfort and well-being of this afflicted class. It may be doubted, however, whether as yet they have received the full consideration which is their due, or have participated in any adequate degree in the benefits provided for them. Blindness is a condition which few but those who practically know it can ever comprehend. The loss of bodily vision alone is a fearful calamity, but far deeper is that inner dulness and deadness which so often follows the bodily affliction. What must be the sensations of those who dwell in continual darkness, who only hear of things which others see, who feel painfully and slowly what the eye surveys with ease and rapidity,

and whose world is circumscribed by the little circle which they can touch with their own hands? External, physical darkness is too often not the only or chief calamity in blindness, though it is in some measure a type of the gloom, doubt, and dejection which befall those thus afflicted.

It may, therefore, not be inopportune to consider the blind in relation to the Poor Law, in order to ascertain the nature of the statutes enacted in their behalf, and whether these cannot be rendered of greater service.

During the years 1886 to 1889, the condition of the blind in the United Kingdom formed the subject of a very searching inquiry, before a Royal Commission under the chairmanship of Lord Egerton of Tatton, appointed "to investigate and report upon the condition of the blind, the deaf and dumb, &c." The Report of this Commission, submitted to Parliament in 1889, constitutes a record of the utmost importance, embracing not only an epitome of expert opinion in relation to every phase of the subjects investigated, but also a series of "Recommendations" by the Commissioners themselves as to the further steps necessary for the advancement and well-being of the blind.

In this Report the blind were divided into three main classes :—

- I. From birth up to 21 years of age.
- II. " 21 to 50.
- III. " 50 upwards.

The number of the blind in each of these divisions in England and Wales at the time of the last census, 1901, was as follows :—

	Males.	Females.	Total.
I. From birth to 21 -	1,975	1,544	3,519
II. " 21 to 50 -	4,389	3,258	7,647
III. " 50 upwards -	6,772	7,379	14,151
	13,136	12,181	25,317

The "Recommendations" of the Royal Commission in reference to children of school age were subsequently embodied in the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, 1893, whereby the education of blind children became compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen, and the responsibilities in regard to them, with one or two slight exceptions, were transferred from the Guardians to the Education Authorities.

The advantages conferred upon the children by this beneficent measure have been very great, and have led to the adoption of many improvements in schools for the blind. The children are much more alert, healthy, and vigorous than formerly, and the standard of school life is much higher in every respect.

Moreover, in Bradford, the young people from the School for the Blind, Carlton Street, on arriving at sixteen years of age, are received into the Bradford Institution for the Blind for one month on trial, and, if found suitable, a report is made concerning them to the Bradford education authority, whereupon grants of maintenance scholarships, tenable at the Institution (now a certified training centre for the blind under the Board of Education), of the value of £10 first year, £12 second year, and £15 third year, are made to each pupil. Similar movements are in progress at other centres.

Amongst recent developments of an educational character may be mentioned the study of shorthand and typewriting, which is now taught at Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, York, and other leading schools for the blind. Several blind students of both sexes have already obtained appointments as typists, some of them in the offices of public bodies, and are fulfilling their duties to the complete satisfaction of those by whom they are employed. These gratifying results are necessarily confined to those pupils who remain at

school long enough to obtain a good, sound and reliable education, but they indicate that with suitable training and environment many of the blind can be enabled to become skilful and efficient workers in vocations to which, formerly, "loss of sight" constituted an insuperable bar.

The Royal Commission were of opinion that :—

"It is better for the local authority or the State to expend its funds on the elementary and technical education of the blind for a few years rather than to have to support them through life in idleness, or to allow them to obtain their livelihood from public or private charity" (Report, p. 38, par. 240).

And in regard to industrial training they recommended :—

"That from sixteen to twenty-one the school authority should have the power and duty to give to the necessitous blind a liberal grant to maintain themselves while learning a trade."

"That the adult blind and those who become blind from twenty-one to fifty should equally receive help from the school authority in the same way as if they were under twenty-one" (p. 40, par. 247).

In December 1896 an influential deputation from the leading schools and institutions for the blind in England and Wales waited upon his Grace the Duke of Devonshire, Lord President of the Council, to urge upon his Grace, as head of the Education Department, the necessity for some provision being made whereby the benefits conferred under the Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, 1893, might be continued during such further period as was necessary for a blind person to learn a trade.

His Grace, in the course of his reply, expressed much personal sympathy with the blind and with the efforts put forth on their behalf, but deprecated additional legislation as inexpedient and unnecessary in view of the powers already entrusted to Boards of

Guardians in relation to the blind, which would, in his opinion, be found adequate for all the objects sought to be attained.

At the time of the last census seven thousand six hundred and forty-seven of the blind were from twenty-one to fifty years of age, of whom probably, not less than 4,000 had become blind after the age of twenty-one. It will be seen how large a number, therefore, are affected by the recommendation just quoted, and how important it is that the same thoughtful consideration should be extended to them as is being shown to the blind children and young people in schools and institutions. There are, doubtless, quite a number amongst them who are capable of being taught a trade, and, if given the opportunity, of becoming self-supporting, but for whom as yet no adequate provision has been made. It is eminently desirable that Boards of Guardians should realise their responsibilities in this matter, and exercise the powers conferred upon them for the benefit of the adult blind with no niggardly hand. The wisdom of such a course has been established again and again in the case of the Bradford Guardians. To quote two or three instances only by way of illustration : A youth, twenty-one years of age, without friends, homeless and blind, was sent to the Bradford Institution two years ago, at the instance of the Guardians, who agreed to pay twelve shillings per week for his board, &c., during the time necessary for his training as a blind workman. At the end of twelve months he had acquired sufficient skill to be able to earn nine shillings per week, and to relieve the Guardians of that portion of the cost during the remainder of his training. He is now earning his full maintenance, and is no longer a charge upon the rates. Another case is that of a man who became blind after thirty, who was married and had two young children. The Guardians made somewhat similar arrangements in his case, and so great was his diligence

and application, that, by the end of the first year, he was able to earn the full amount granted, and to become entirely self-supporting.

Another case is that of a young girl whose home surroundings were not very satisfactory, and who was sent to an institution in another town. She has profited so much by the instructions given, and done such good work there, that a year ago the fee for her board, &c., was reduced by one-half, and at the end of this year, when her training will be completed, it is anticipated that she will be fully able to maintain herself.

The last and greatest section is that of the aged blind, of whom, in 1901, there were 14,151—viz., 6,772 men and 7,379 women.

In regard to this class, the Royal Commission made the following statement:—

“The State does nothing for the aged and infirm blind, except, through the Guardians, to offer them the Workhouse, without any special provision for them to alleviate their lot, or to distinguish them from the general mass of the paupers reduced by their own vice and folly, idleness and improvidence, to seek poor relief.”

“We would observe that, on general grounds we think that the aged blind should be treated on a different principle from the ordinary pauper; they are deserving of more generous treatment, and as their poverty does not arise from any fault of their own, we consider that in many instances the ordinary Workhouse test should be relaxed, and outdoor relief given to them on a liberal scale” (p. 28, par. 124).

“They are as distinct from the ‘pauper’ in the ordinary sense, as the ‘pauper’ is distinct from the ‘criminal,’ and, if possible, they should not be subject to any legal disqualification in consequence of their infirmity” (p. 12, par. 9).

It is a significant comment upon the above that on the 2nd September 1887 upwards of 8,000 blind persons, above the age of twenty-one, were in receipt of

poor relief—viz., 3,278 (indoor) and 4,895 (outdoor). (See Parliamentary Return, No. 326 of 1887).

A year ago it became my duty to make some inquiries respecting blind persons in receipt of poor relief, and twenty-two Boards of Guardians and Parish Councils were good enough to furnish statistics relating to the blind under their charge, of which the following is a transcript :—

Union, Township, or Parish.	In Work-houses or Infirmaries.	In Schools, &c., for the Blind.	In receipt of Outdoor Relief.	Total.
Blackburn - - -	14	8	15	37
Bolton - - -	18	7	22	47
Bradford - - -	22	4	21	47
Brighton - - -	25	3	24	52
Bristol, - - -	39	16	52	107
Cardiff - - -	21	11	60	92
Ecclesall Bierlow - -	21	...	4	25
Edinburgh - - -	19	10	23	52
Govan - - -	19	5	23	47
Leicester - - -	15	1	21	37
Liverpool - - -	86*	13	28	127
" West Derby - -	45	...	40	85
London—				
St Pancras - - -	63	6	not stated	69
Camberwell - - -	39	6	38	83
Poplar - - -	36	8	28	72
West Ham - - -	26	8	46	80
Manchester - - -	45	13	9	67
" Chorlton - - -	32	14	15	61
Salford - - -	26	11	14	51
Swansea - - -	14	5	35	54
Wolstanton and Burslem	5	2	18	25
Wolverhampton - -	23	4	22	49
	653	155	558	1,366

The above returns may be regarded as typical of the state of the blind poor in most of the large centres

* 29 under treatment in hospital.

of population, and it may be well to consider them somewhat in detail in this connection.

Of the 1,368 persons enumerated—(a) 653 were in Workhouses, infirmaries, and asylums; (b) 155 in schools, Homes, or institutions for the blind; (c) 558 were in receipt of outdoor relief; and (d) 2 children were in a Cottage Home. Adopting the classification of the Royal Commission, the numbers in each division were, approximately, as follows:—

	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	Total.
I. Under 21 years of age	11	70	12	2	= 95
II. From 21 to 50	129	78	194	...	= 401
III. From 50 upwards	513	7	352	...	= 872
	653	155	558	2	= 1368

It will be noted how large a proportion of those in groups (a) and (c) come under the designation of the "Aged Blind." This fact is further illustrated and emphasised by the following tables:—

1. A TABLE showing the respective ages, in June 1905, of 561 blind inmates of Workhouses.

	Under								Over	Total.
	10.	20.	30.	40.	50.	60.	70.	80.	80.	
Males	2	1	14	17	38	31	74	44	25	= 246
Females	2	4	13	15	27	35	78	94	47	= 315
	4	5	27	32	65	66	152	138	72	= 561

2. A TABLE showing the "Age at which blindness occurred" of 512 such persons, viz.—

(a) 120 persons under 50 years of age, and
(b) 392 persons over 50.

		Birth.	1-10.	20.	30.	40.	50.	Total.			
(a)	Males	-	9	4	8	11	16	15 = 63			
	Females	-	12	9	4	13	15	4 = 57			
			21	13	12	24	31	19 = 120			
		Birth.	1-10.	20.	30.	40.	50.	60.	70.	80.	Total.
(b)	Males	-	3	4	2	4	15	25	45	41	27 = 166
	Females	-	3	6	2	12	6	25	45	73	54 = 226
			6	10	4	16	21	50	90	114	81 = 392

3. A TABLE showing the relationship between the "Age at which blindness occurred" and the subsequent "Date of entry into the Workhouse," in regard to 276 of these persons.

	Age at which Blindness Occurred.	Date of Entry into the Workhouse.			
		At once, or within 1 Year.	Within 1-3 Years.	Within 4-15 Years.	Inmates previous to Loss of Sight.
Males.					
15	50-55	1	3	9	2
22	55-60	4	5	7	6
25	60-65	8	6	5	6
18	65-70	6	2	5	5
15	70-75	3	1	3	8
16	75-85	4	4	3	5
—		—	—	—	—
111		26	21	32	32
Females.					
12	50-55	3	4	4	1
19	55-60	4	3	8	4
38	60-65	11	8	14	5
34	65-70	7	12	9	6
34	70-75	14	7	10	3
28	75-85	14	6	4	4
—		—	—	—	—
165		53	40	49	23

A study of these tables indicates how large a number of persons of advanced age have been compelled, by reason of blindness, to invoke the aid of the Guardians, and to subject themselves to conditions which must be exceedingly painful, especially to those who, prior to this calamity, had been able to maintain themselves in circumstances of comfort and independence. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, when they find themselves in the unhappy position of being "old and blind," devoid of occupation, neglected by their friends, and obliged to associate with persons who have little sympathy with them in their affliction.

tion, that so many should give way to grief, loneliness, and despair.

The Royal Commission, in referring to this section of the blind, offered the following "Recommendation":—

"We think that when the industrious and well-conducted blind are unable to work, and have to fall back on the assistance of the Poor Law, the Workhouse test should not be applied, and we recommend that there should be a liberal outdoor relief (which should not subject them to any legal disqualification) given to those who have friends to live with, and that the blind be not forced to go into the Workhouse; and in the case of those who are admitted into the House, the Workhouse selected for the purpose should be in a town where an institution or association for the blind already exists; the blind inmates, moreover, ought to be treated in a more generous way than the ordinary paupers, and power should be given to the Guardians in London and elsewhere to set apart a separate ward or home for the reception of the aged pauper blind, or to combine with other Boards in providing a separate home for them. In the case of the women it might be expedient to place them in a Cottage Home" (p. 42, par. 263).

Admirable as are the suggestions contained in this "Recommendation," it may be questioned whether they are fully adequate to meet all the needs of the case. In any well-considered scheme for dealing with this section of the blind poor, provision should be made for careful study of the history, habits, circumstances and environment of each individual, and time should be allowed for experiments as to the particular course of treatment calculated to render the greatest benefit.

Many of the blind are very sensitive, reserved, and shy before strangers, often suspicious, and occasionally very self-willed and awkward to deal with, neverthe-

less, under suitable conditions, they are capable of being made happy and contented. Congenial occupation is one of the first needs of the blind, and when this is provided wisely, even though the relative value of the work accomplished is small, its beneficial and ameliorative effect upon the individual is incalculable. Patience, suitable oversight, and kindly, sympathetic direction will work wonders, and show that many, even of the older blind, are not nearly so helpless as is supposed, but are still capable of taking part in the useful activities of those by whom they are surrounded. It might be desirable that each Board of Guardians should appoint a small sub-committee of three or five members, one of whom should be a lady, specially to deal with matters relating to the blind, and to whom should be referred all applications from blind applicants.

The members of the sub-committee would in the course of time acquire special knowledge of their subject, and if each case was referred to them before being submitted to the consideration of the whole Board, they might be enabled to render not only greater service to their colleagues but also more efficient aid to the blind.

The powers conferred upon Boards of Guardians in relation to the blind have been carefully arranged and set forth in the Introduction to the "Annual Charities Register and Digest," edited by Professor C. S. Loch, Secretary to the Council of the Charity Organisation Society, London, and who has kindly given permission for extracts to be made from his book for the purposes of this paper, the edition quoted being the one published in 1904, chap. xlv., pp. cxxi.-cxxiv., &c.

"The Guardians of the poor may give 'necessary relief' to the lame, impotent, old, blind, and such others among them being 'poor and unable to work'" (43 Eliz., cap. 2).

"The Guardians may relieve a blind or deaf and dumb wife, and the relief thus given will not be considered as relief to the husband" (4 & 5 Will. IV., cap. 76, sec. 56).

"The Guardians may provide for the reception, maintenance, and instruction of any adult poor person, being blind or deaf and dumb, in any hospital or institution established for the reception of persons suffering from such infirmities, and may pay the charges incurred in the conveyance of such persons to and from the same" (30 & 31 Vict., cap. 106, sec. 21, 1867).

"The Guardians may send a child to any certified school—*i.e.*, any institution for the instruction of the blind, deaf, dumb, lame, deformed, or idiotic—but not to a certified reformatory school. But the child must be an orphan or deserted by his or her parents or surviving parent, or one whose parents or surviving parent shall consent to the sending of such child to such school" (25 & 26 Vict., cap. 43, secs. 1 and 10, 1862).

"The Guardians may also, with the approval of the Local Government Board, send any poor, deaf and dumb, or blind child to any school fitted for the reception of such a child, though such school shall not have been certified" (31 & 32 Vict., cap. 122, sec. 42, 1868).

"The Elementary Education (Blind and Deaf Children) Act, 1893, has limited the powers of the Guardians in regard to children, however, and from the 1st of July 1894, their duties in this respect have been confined to blind or deaf children, who are (*a*) idiots or imbeciles; or (*b*) resident in the Workhouse, or in an institution to which they have been sent by a Board of Guardians from a Workhouse; or (*c*) boarded out by Guardians" (56 & 57 Vict., cap. 42, sec. 13).

"The responsibility of a parent towards the maintenance of a blind or deaf and dumb child relieved by the Guardians remains intact, though he does not by

the receipt of such relief, become, in the eye of the law, a pauper" (4 & 5 Will. IV., cap. 76, sec. 56.)

"Further, where the Guardians are giving outdoor relief to a parent they must make it a condition that elementary education is provided for his blind or deaf child, and must give further relief, if necessary, with that object" (56 & 57 Vict., cap. 42, 1893).

"The Guardians may subscribe towards any asylum or institution for blind or deaf and dumb persons, or for persons suffering from any permanent or natural infirmity, or towards any association or society for aiding such persons, or towards any other asylum or institution which appears to the Guardians to be calculated to render useful aid in the administration of the relief of the poor" (42 & 43 Vict., cap. 54, sec. 10, 1879.)

This provision, it is held, allows Boards of Guardians, with the consent of the Local Government Board, to subscribe any reasonable sum weekly to the authorities of an institution for the maintenance of a case so long as it is in the institution, and empowers them to carry out the recommendations of the Royal Commission, quoted above, in regard to the maintenance and training of young persons "from sixteen to twenty-one," and of "the adult blind and those who become blind from twenty-one to fifty."

In regard to the aged and those whose friends are no longer able to look after them; the Guardians may, if they think fit, subscribe to any asylum, institution, or home for the blind fitted to receive such persons, in order that they may be maintained therein.

Furthermore, regarding the duties of Guardians as to "outdoor relief," the following quotations from the "Introduction" are of importance:—

"Subject to certain exceptions mentioned hereafter, relief otherwise than in the Workhouse is prohibited to any able-bodied person, male or female"; or, in other words it is provided "That no relief shall be

given to any able-bodied person while he is employed for wages or other hire or remuneration by any person."

"Whether a person is, or is not, able-bodied is a question of fact depending upon the physical strength and condition of the applicant for relief. Thus, children of fourteen or fifteen, able to maintain themselves, may be considered able-bodied, and a man over sixty is not necessarily able-bodied" (chap. xiv., p. xxvi.).

"The observance of the foregoing regulation shall not be imperative in the case of a person receiving relief on account of any sickness, accident, or bodily or mental infirmity affecting such person or any of his family" (chap. xxviii., p. lxxviii.).

The importance of the last provision in relation to the blind is very great, inasmuch as there are many such persons whose physical strength or mental endowment is below the average, frequently, as a result of the causes which produced blindness, and who whilst capable of learning a trade, and of being fairly diligent and industrious, are nevertheless such slow workers that they can never earn the whole sum necessary for their maintenance.

For such persons to receive a little systematic "necessary relief," as a supplement to their wages, would seem to be a reasonable arrangement, quite in keeping with the tenor of the regulations affecting relief to the blind.

Being wishful to ascertain how far Professor Loch agreed with this view, the favour of his opinion on the matter was invited, and the following was his reply:—

"The paragraphs you refer to on p. lxxviii. of the introduction to the "Annual Charities Register and Digest" for 1904 might no doubt be taken as pointing in the direction you suggest."

"Pp. cxxi.-cxxiv. deal specially with the 'blind,' the claim for relief is checked throughout by 'inability to

work' in the case of the lame, impotent, old, blind, &c. In the case of the blind, however, there is a relative ability to work. The question therefore is, to adjust a claim based on such a relative ability to the conditions of satisfactory administration."

"The argument against supplementing wage by relief is good. The question is, whether it applies to the blind, and, if so, whether to any material extent."

"In the case of normal unskilled labour, the argument is wholly good. And it applied to any particular group of normal able-bodied or partially able-bodied workers. Other things being equal, what is given in outdoor relief will be saved to the employer in wage. Wages will fall as outdoor relief increases.

"How does this affect the blind? The Royal Commission, as you see (p. cxxii.), did not think that it did to any considerable extent. The point is really one of fact—of which I think you could best judge. What is the volume of the blind trade? Would the institutions pay less if the Guardians gave outdoor relief? Could there be any effective stipulation on the part of the Guardians that the institution paid so much—proportionately to what they paid? And, if that could not be arranged, might not a better organisation of 'blind' charities make good the difference on some such basis? All these are points for us to settle, I think.

"On the main issue, that many of the blind, even if they are energetic, can never support themselves by their earnings, I suppose we are agreed. If that be so, some one must, and, I suppose, actually does, supplement, or there would be partial starvation. And, again, if that be so, the only question is whether the Guardians should supplement rather than other bodies or persons.

"Against this there is the argument that out of the seemingly inexhaustible fund of the rates, doles or gifts may be given so regularly, and asked for with

such certainty of claim, that they, more than uncertain voluntary gifts, make the people dependent, and, being dependent, less energetic and more pauperised. And on this ground it is well, I think, to avoid the rates altogether, if possible.

“On the other hand, I think that, in the main, the conclusion of the Royal Commission was right, and in that case the check on outdoor relief to the blind must be found in strict inquiry and close supervision—the managers of workshops and the Guardians co-operating with that object, and for the self-respecting relief of the blind.”

This expression of opinion by so eminent an expert as Professor Loch is a contribution to the study of “blind relief” of the utmost value, and worthy the thoughtful consideration of all persons interested in this somewhat difficult question.

The suggestion that, for the solution of many difficulties, it is desirable the Boards of Guardians and the committees and managers of institutions should enter into closer relationship with each other, is especially to be commended, as calculated to secure the wise adjustment of many matters relating to the blind poor.

That such a course is not only desirable, but also quite practicable, has been demonstrated in the city of Bradford within a very recent period. The attention of the City Council having been directed to the subject of the “needy blind,” a Sub-Committee consisting of representatives from the City Council, the Boards of Guardians, the School Board, the Institution for the Blind, and the Trades Council, was appointed during the year 1902 to investigate the state and condition of every blind person within the city, and also to ascertain the procedure adopted at the School for the Blind, Carlton Street, and the Institution workshops, North Parade, with regard to the education, training, and remuneration of those engaged therein.

After careful and minute investigation into the

circumstances of all the blind in Bradford, numbering 281 (viz., 154 males and 127 females), and full inquiry into the work and management of the Institution, &c., the Sub-Committee adopted the following conclusions and recommendations :—

“The Sub-Committee satisfied themselves that hitherto all has been done for blind children at Carlton Street School for the Blind which it was possible for the School Boards to do.”

“A recommendation was sent to the Technical Instruction Committee that they should establish a system of maintenance training scholarships for the blind above the age of sixteen ; and

“The Health Committee was recommended and urged to take all such measures as they might deem advisable for preventing the occurrence of blindness in children during early infancy.

“Steps were also taken to bring before the Guardians the condition of a few of the blind (both Institution workers and others) in the city, who were unable to earn sufficient to maintain themselves, with the object of endeavouring to induce the Guardians to make a small grant to the Institution for the Blind for the purpose of supplementing such earnings.”—*Reports of Committees, Bradford City Council, 1903*, pp. 36, 37.

In the course of the discussions which took place between the Guardians and the Committee of the Institution respecting the persons referred to in the preceding paragraph, (each case being considered separately and in much detail), the Chairman of the Guardians, Mr F. H. Bentham, propounded the following scheme for a “Secondary Institution for the Blind,” specially intended to meet the needs of certain blind persons who were unable to earn sufficient to maintain themselves :—

That the Committee of the existing Institution should establish and equip a residential Institution specially adapted for the maintenance and employment

of blind persons who were unable to earn sufficient for their own maintenance.

That the work carried on there should be, as far as possible, similar to that in the existing Institution, and that the workers should have every facility in the way of training and oversight, which would enable them to make the best possible use of such ability as they might possess.

That the management and administration should be under the control of the Committee of the existing Institution, such productions as were found to be saleable being sold through the ordinary business channels, and the proceeds credited to the "Secondary Institution."

And in all other respects, that the new Institution should be carried on in harmony with the general character and purposes of the existing Institution, but, so far as the workers and inmates were concerned, as an entirely separate organisation.

This having been done, the Guardians would be willing to make such a grant per head, as would defray, in so far as the amount produced by the efforts of the workers was insufficient, the entire cost of maintenance and administration.

Mr Bentham's scheme received very careful consideration at the hands of the Committee, and was regarded as a remarkable and most attractive proposal.

The urgent need for immediate action, however, in some of the cases under consideration, coupled with the delay which must necessarily arise before such an Institution, even upon the modest scale, could be provided, rendered it necessary to defer the adoption of the scheme for a time, and the cases were eventually dealt with by other means. Moreover, it was deemed inadvisable to carry out the scheme in the existing Institution, on the ground that the presence of persons subsidised by the Guardians might have a tendency to

depreciate the energy, industry, and independence of the ordinary blind workers.

On the other hand, it was agreed, that whenever such a scheme became possible, admission to the existing Institution should always be open to those inmates of the secondary one, who could fit themselves to earn their own living, and might thus serve as an incentive to their greater diligence and efficiency.

A few months ago, on its becoming known that the Guardians were about to vacate premises which had been occupied as a temporary home for females, steps were taken to secure a transfer of the tenancy to the Committee of the Institution for the establishment of a Training Home on the lines laid down in Mr Bentham's proposals.

The premises have been taken over and fitted up as a Residential Training Home and workshop for blind men, and operations have been in progress during the past six or seven weeks, three blind men having been transferred from the Workhouse as a beginning.

The new Institution has been established so recently that, as yet, there is not much to be said regarding it. It provides accommodation for fifteen inmates, and has been given the name of the "Springfield Training Home for Men," in connection with the Bradford Institution for the Blind. The three men already admitted, aged thirty-four, forty-six, and forty-nine years respectively, have made a good beginning, and there is good reason to hope that in due time they will become fairly competent workmen. The training is carried on in precisely the same way as at the existing Institution, and every effort is being made to render the Home a valuable adjunct to the work of the Institution.

In bringing this paper to a close it may be well to remind Guardians present at this Conference of the grave responsibilities conferred upon them by the Legislature, and to urge them to reconsider the whole

subject of the care and treatment of the blind poor in the light of the foregoing statements. The Legislature, in delegating to Boards of Guardians the care of the blind, was doubtless influenced thereto by the fact that there was no other public body to whom they might be entrusted with safety, and, as has already been stated, their powers are wide and varied.

Much yet remains to be done, however, before the blind can be regarded as adequately cared for, and it is eminently desirable that each Board of Guardians should investigate carefully, patiently, and sympathetically the condition of the blind intrusted to it. If a small Committee were appointed for this purpose in each of the Unions, and particulars were obtained somewhat similar to those suggested by the series of questions contained in the "Appendix" to this paper, much valuable information would be received, and many opportunities for alleviating the sorrows and sufferings of the blind be discovered.

Many of the blind possess qualities which are capable of being quickened, roused, and cherished into new life, whereby they may learn that there are still left to them many avenues of pleasure, wisdom, and inward light, and that, despite their blindness, it is still possible for them to live bright, happy, and useful lives.

APPENDIX.

A. SCHEME OF QUESTIONS RELATING TO INDIVIDUAL BLIND PERSONS.

Name; age; sex; place of birth; single or married; age at which blindness occurred; cause of blindness; degree of blindness—(a) total darkness; (b) can see shadows; (c) can count fingers at the distance of one foot; (d) imperfect vision to such an extent as to be unable to follow a sighted occupation; occupation before becoming blind; whether suffering from any ailment besides blindness; if trained in any school or institution for the blind, where,

how long, and to what trade; whether able to do simple work such as wood-chopping, knitting, cleaning, &c.; whether able to read books in the raised type, Moon or Braille; condition of general health—(a) mental; (b) physical, character, temperament; if resident in the Workhouse—(a) date of entry; (b) whether blindness preceded or followed that event; and (c) the time which elapsed between (b) and (a).

B. QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE ADMINISTRATION OF RELIEF TO THE BLIND POOR.

(a.) *General.*

1. What is the number of blind persons now being maintained by the Guardians—

- In the Workhouse?
- In the infirmary?
- In Cottage Homes?
- In special institutions for the blind?
- By outdoor relief?

classified in the following order:—(a) infants; (b) children of school age, 5-16; (c) young people, 16-21; (d) adults of average health and capacity, 21-50; (e) sick, aged, and infirm.

2. What is the usual practice with regard to the care and treatment of—

- (a.) Blind infants?
- (b.) Blind children of school age?

3. Are blind children on attaining the age of sixteen, and those who become blind between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one, sent to special institutions or workshops for the blind in order that they may be taught suitable handicrafts?

4. Do the Guardians provide in like manner for adult persons who become blind after twenty-one, and who, in consequence of blindness, are no longer able to maintain themselves by their former occupations?

(b.) *Indoor.*

5. Is anything attempted at the Workhouse in the way of teaching simple occupations to the blind inmates, such as chopping or bundling firewood, picking fibre, knitting, laundry work, helping in the kitchen, &c., and are the blind encouraged to take their full share in the ordinary duties of the House?

6. Are there any special regulations in regard to the classification, warding, and treatment of the adult blind inmates of the Workhouse?

7. Are sighted inmates encouraged to be "friends" of the blind, and to act as their "guides" during exercise?

8. Are books provided in the raised types, Moon or Braille, for those who can read them, or who may wish to learn?

9. Are the blind inmates visited frequently by lady readers or visitors from the local Institution or Home Teaching Society for the Blind?

10. Are there any blind inmates who suffer from other afflictions besides blindness, and what are the arrangements adopted in regard to them?

(c.) Outdoor.

11. Are those in receipt of outdoor relief treated in a more generous way than the ordinary paupers, and, remembering that the blind have frequently to pay small sums for services rendered to them by neighbours and others, which sighted persons in receipt of poor relief can do for themselves, are they granted relief on a little higher scale?

12. Is the outdoor relief granted to aged and infirm blind persons living with relations or friends forwarded to them, or do they have to go to the relief station for it?

13. In view of the reluctance which some respectable blind persons, whose circumstances are known to the visitor of the local Blind Society to be straitened, feel with regard to making personal application for relief, might it not be desirable for the Guardians to consider such cases upon the recommendation of the Society, and if found upon investigation to be thoroughly satisfactory, that arrangements should be devised whereby the relief administered to such persons might be forwarded to them through the voluntary agency of the said Society or Institution for the Blind?

14. In like manner, might it not be of public advantage that the Guardians should invite the Committee of the local Institution to take a deeper interest in the welfare of all blind recipients of poor relief, whether indoor or outdoor, and, in regard to difficult cases, that there should be an interchange of opinion as to the course to be pursued regarding them?

DISCUSSION.

The PRESIDENT remarked that Mr Tate's paper had covered the ground so thoroughly that nobody appeared anxious to discuss it. Perhaps that was the greatest compliment that could be paid to Mr Tate's handling of the subject. Every one, he continued, felt the deepest sympathy with the unfortunate blind, and speaking for the Leeds Board he said that they did all they reasonably could to encourage the magnificent institution in the city which had the care and tuition of the blind. He hoped his colleagues in considering this paper would do a little more in that direction, for he believed a

great deal more might be done, because money spent upon it was a very good investment from the Guardians' point of view. He was satisfied that pretty nearly all those who came under the purview of the institution would seek relief from the Board were it not that the institution taught them how to assist in their own maintenance.

Mr MALLINSON (Huddersfield) commented upon the painful spectacle presented in the streets of that town by many blind persons, who were brought by their friends to street corners, in order to beg of the passers-by. Some of these had a musical instrument, and some were led by dogs, but in any case they were exposed to all kinds of weather, and he thought it was a disgrace to any society that they should be allowed to stand in the streets as they were. Something should be done to prevent them coming out in this way.

Mr TATE said that three years ago an inquiry took place in Bradford, and it was instituted because the City Council were anxious to do away with street begging by those who suffered from blindness or other infirmities, and, as a result, the Bradford blind were not now allowed to beg in the streets, provision having been made for them by a magistrate. He quoted figures showing that, as a result of close inquiry into the circumstances of the blind people of the city and their respective occupations, only eight persons out of a total of 277 got their living by begging in the streets. Without being particularly boastful, one felt that that was indirect testimony to the splendid work which the Blind Institution in Bradford had been doing for the last forty years. Of the eight persons mentioned only four were born in Bradford. "I believe," he added, "that you have here an illustration of how the blind beggar problem can be dealt with." Huddersfield ought to begin at once to find an institution of the same kind, and the Council should take the matter up as a municipal problem. They had not yet got a secondary home in Bradford for the women, because there was only one woman who would be eligible, and provision had been made for her. He said that in Germany the care of the blind had been specialised, so that every afflicted person was looked after by some kind and interested person or guardian (not a Guardian of the poor), some clergyman or philanthropic individual who concentrated his attention upon one individual. This system operated in Saxony, and he commended it to those present. They should try to get some resident in the neighbourhood where the blind lived to be a real friend to them. He also commended the sub-committee idea that had been in vogue in Bradford during the last two years. It was appointed by the City Council; it represented all philanthropic bodies of the city, and it practically went to the bottom of everything.

Mr E. A. RIGBY (Huddersfield) then read the following paper:—

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
VAGRANCY COMMITTEE.

BY MR E. A. RIGBY,
Clerk to the Guardians, Huddersfield.

THE subject that I have been asked to introduce for discussion at this Conference is the most discussed subject in Poor Law circles this year, and the problem it brings before us is one of the most difficult with which the social worker has to deal. In the past it has many times received patient, exhaustive, and sympathetic attention. To-day I propose to consider certain phases of this old problem, with special reference to the light focussed upon it by the Departmental Committee, which presented its Report at the beginning of the present year.

It will be desirable that at the outset a short statement should be made as to the constitution and work of the Committee.

Following upon the close of the South African War there was a very large increase of vagrants all over the country, and strong representations were made to the Government to cause an inquiry to be made into the subject. A Committee was appointed in July 1904. The terms of reference were: "To inquire and report with respect to England and Wales as to—(1) The law applicable to persons of the vagrant class; (2) the administration of the law; (3) any amendment which should be made in it or in its administration."

The Committee was composed of the Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board, a Poor Law Inspector, and a Medical Inspector, three representatives of the Home Office, and Sir William Chance, the well-known Secretary of the Central Poor Law Conference.

The Committee held 36 meetings and examined

56 witnesses, and in February of this year issued their Report. The Report covers 123 pages; the minutes of evidence 382 pages of double columns; and there is an appendix of statistics, charts, maps, &c., covering 208 pages. The Report is divided into 19 chapters, an introduction, and memoranda by Captain Eardley Wilmot and Mr Simpson, in which these gentlemen express their dissent from their colleagues on certain minor points of the Report.

There is a valuable historical summary of legislation and administration from 1495 to our own times. One would like to quote largely from this summary, but time forbids, and I must content myself with saying that in 1821 a Select Committee of the House of Commons considered the subject, and it was then stated that during the preceding three hundred years 49 Acts of Parliament had been passed dealing with the question, of which 27 were then in operation. The Vagrancy Act of 1824 was the ultimate outcome of the Report, and its provisions are still in force to-day.

The subject referred to the Committee for consideration was *vagrancy*, and I want here to point out that this is a very much larger question than that of the casual poor who frequent our tramp wards.

From the nature of the subject reliable statistics are almost impossible to obtain; but there are many estimates. One of the best of these is that of Mr Preston Thomas, Local Government Board Inspector, who has given very close attention to the matter. He puts the habitual vagrants down at 20,000 to 30,000, and of these about 8,000 are frequenters of the casual wards.

If we adopt these figures as a basis it will be seen that about one-third of the normal tramping population of the country find refuge in the tramp wards; the remaining two-thirds put up at common lodging-houses, municipal lodging-houses, or in the country sleep out in barns, out-houses, and the like.

In times of trade depression this number at once rises very considerably. It is found also that local statistics are very much affected by the contiguity of public works, such as the building of railways, reservoirs, sewage works, tramways, &c., and in certain districts the potato harvest, hop-picking, and the fruit season swell the tramp wards far beyond their capacity to accommodate.

The Committee's recommendations are thirty-six in number. Of these nine have reference to the transfer of the wards to the police; five deal with proposals for giving assistance to *bona fide* work seekers; two deal with vagrancy offences; six set out suggestions with regard to labour colonies; one recommends economy in buildings; three deal with common lodging-houses; two suggest the registration of shelters and free food distributions; two have reference to the spread of disease by vagrants; one with the practice of sleeping out; one with pedlars and their licenses; one with the arrangements for women; and three give us the Committee's suggestions for dealing with children.

A careful study of these recommendations leads to the conclusion that with most of the suggestions one can entirely agree. Such as that short sentences for vagrancy offences are not only useless but positively harmful; the suggestions that common lodging-houses should be licensed, subjected to stricter supervision and control, and that the police should have a right of entry, and be charged with the responsibility of seeing that regulations as to lodgers and cleanliness, decency, &c., should be complied, with appear to me to be excellent. The recommendations that shelters and free food distributions ought to be under control, also appear to me very good, as it seems to be abundantly demonstrated that these well-meant institutions are most prolific in producing and sustaining a large number of persons of the vagrant class. The recommendations as to the spread of disease by

vagrants, sleeping-out, and pedlars, are all such as one would like to see carried into effect with the least possible delay.

Having said so much as to the greater number of the Committee's recommendations, I want to turn now to three sets of suggestions which, in the judgment of many, form the most important recommendations in the Report. I allude, of course, to the proposals as to the transfer of the casual wards to the police; the provision of assistance to *bona-fide* work seekers, and the establishment of labour colonies. In paragraphs 113 to 119 of the Report, it is alleged that the casual ward system has failed. The Committee (113) say: "It is clear to us that the present system neither repels nor reforms the vagrant. It is agreed that the essential condition of success is uniformity of administration, but the evidence is overwhelming to the effect that this object is not attained. *In most cases the Orders of the Local Government Board are evaded, and in many absolutely disregarded.*"

"In many wards tramps are not regularly bathed or searched, in many more the two nights' detention is not enforced, while in some no task of work is required at all. *It is, of course, much easier for a Workhouse master or casual ward superintendent to allow vagrants to discharge themselves on the morning after admission without labour than to detain them and insist upon their doing the regulation task of work; and the discretion which is left to the officers with respect to the discharge of certain classes of vagrants results in a complete variety of practice.* The wards also vary in diet and every other respect."

"The evidence also shows the practical impossibility of obtaining uniformity under the present system. It is clear that this must be the result when the administration is in the hands of 600 independent authorities who are actuated by no common principle, *except the desire to get rid of the vagrant as cheaply as possible.*"

In the above paragraph the Committee give us their reasons for recommending that the administration of the casual wards should be transferred from the Guardians to the police.

They set out with the postulate, that the object of the casual ward system is either "to repel or reform," and that in order to attain either of these objects, "the essential condition of success is uniformity of administration." They assert that this cannot be obtained so long as the wards are managed by 600 popularly elected bodies, and they urge that the administration should be transferred to the police, who are managed by some 200 popularly elected bodies.

Now, I submit as a matter of fact, that the casual ward system was not established either to repel or reform the vagrant. Repression had been tried for hundreds of years and utterly failed. In the name of the Law, abominable and unutterable cruelties had been perpetrated, and still the vagrant flourished. "A new method was inaugurated, certain acts characteristic of the vagrant were defined as offences, and cumulative punishments were prescribed; at the same time his status was recognised, and food and shelter provided to assist him in his wanderings, though it was sought to prevent a too frequent resort to this assistance by surrounding the gift with irksome conditions."

On humane grounds supper and a night's lodging is provided for every destitute wayfarer who applies for it—the problem being to offer this provision in such a form that it would not attract the idle loafer, whilst rendering the minimum of assistance to the honest traveller. Experience shows that the problem is almost impossible of solution—but there can be no reasonable doubt that in thousands of instances the vagrant has by the present system been repelled. As to the other branch of the charge against the system that "it does not reform," I would simply remark that the idea of making public institutions of this character reformative

is quite a modern one, and it is significant that in the Committee's own suggestion for transferring the wards to the police there is no provision for reformatory machinery. Their reform proposals are entirely separate and distinct from the management of the wards. The wards would be the same, the only difference being that the tasks, the diet, the detention, would be alike over a larger area, and a policeman be at the back of them instead of the vagrant master. Now, as to this word "uniformity," let us try to understand what it means. It cannot mean absolutely identical arrangements for every part of the country. Mr J. Brown, President of the Unions Association, says (981): "Uniformity of treatment of vagrants in the casual wards is a big question, because different counties are in different circumstances, and you could not have identical arrangements in each casual ward."

Mr Baldwyn Fleming, L.G.B. Inspector, says (4917): "Uniformity of treatment in the casual wards as they exist to-day you will never obtain under the present regime—the thing is absolutely impracticable, *even if it were desirable*—but looking to the enormous variation of the situation and character of the individuals who apply for relief, you cannot apply any uniform treatment. No doubt if you could get uniformity which could be judicially and evenly applied everywhere you would do good, but it appears to me to be quite impracticable to achieve." And in answer to a further question he says: "I think when you consider the classes of people that you have to deal with, that *uniformity is not desirable*." Further on he says: "Uniformity of detention and of comfort might be obtained. . . . You would not get uniformity in Quarter Sessions, Standing Joint Committee, or County Council, unless you got all the counties to agree to what they would do."

Mr C. S. Loch, the Secretary of the Charity Organisation Society, says (8704): In answer to the ques-

tion, "Do you think uniformity of administration is desirable?" "Not absolute uniformity of administration. In the main it is, but you may have to make quite different arrangements in a very rural district to what you would make in a crowded district. In that sense there should not be uniformity, but in all the main lines of administration there should be uniformity."

These are wise words spoken by men who know what they are talking about, and are well worth pondering over. But I would ask, Does any one imagine that "uniformity" will solve the problem of vagrancy? To any who are of that opinion I would commend consideration of one little sentence from the evidence of the Chief Constable of Manchester, Mr R. Peacock, who says (7992): "You see in Manchester the vagrants now keep away from the casual wards; the difficulty is not to keep them away but it is that they do not go to the tramp ward. It is proved that there are 600 vagrants in Manchester every night, and there are less than 200 in the tramp ward. The question with the Corporation is how to get the vagrants to use that tramp ward, not how to keep them away!" Will any one contend that on these facts the problem has been solved in Manchester?

There are, no doubt, many other cities that would tell a similar tale, and the main result of strict uniformity of administration would be to drive the vagrant to beg or steal enough to pay for a lodging in the common lodging-house, and it would intensify the professional cadger's whining appeal with which to harrow the hearts of the unthinking public, and you would drive him into resorts and hiding places where he would be no less dangerous and very much more difficult to deal with. There is a point in the matter of repressive administration beyond which your measures for dealing with vagrancy would unquestionably defeat themselves.

But if there is want of uniformity amongst Boards

of Guardians in dealing with this question (and I quite admit that there is), what are the causes, and are they not surmountable by measures shorter, less costly, and more likely to be effectual than transfer to the police? I think there are such alternatives. One great cause is the lack of sufficient accommodation, and this is brought about by the unwillingness of small and poor Unions to build costly wards on the cell system to provide for non-settled poor.

There is very strong ground for the opinion that the tramp belongs to the nation, and therefore that the cost of providing for him ought to be mainly borne by the national exchequer. The National Poor Law Officers' Association are of opinion that if one uniform method of treatment as to diet, work, and detention was prescribed and a payment made per head from imperial taxation on condition that the regulations were observed, it would go far to bring about as much uniformity as is either desirable or possible. With this view I cordially agree, and would earnestly urge its adoption in preference to the recommendations of the Committee.

As evidence that the Boards of Guardians are not so perverse and unreasonable as the Report in places suggests, it may be pointed out that although it is admitted that the adoption of the separate cell system is most costly to introduce, 434 Unions have adopted the system as against 204 that have not.

It is assumed in the paragraph under consideration that the sole responsibility for the failure of the casual ward rests on the Boards of Guardians. May I be permitted to point out that in one of the concluding paragraphs of the Report (431) blame is also placed upon the other partners in the business. "A similar absence of consistency in the enforcement of the law has characterised the action of the police and magistrates. Between the Poor Law and the police the vagrant has flourished. The police authorities

treat the vagrant as a criminal, but do not punish him ; while the Poor Law authorities treat him as a pauper, but do not relieve him." The first part of this sentence is true enough, as many of us are prepared to testify ; the latter part, as we all know, is just the opposite.

Mr Loch says : " If the police carried out laws rigidly against mendicancy and sleeping out in each county, the number of vagrants would go down."

Mr Fenwick, the well-known Stipendiary Magistrate at Bow Street, says : " On the whole, I think the present law with regard to vagrancy, if administered by an active police force and a firm and watchful magistrate, is sufficient to cope with the vagrancy as ordinarily understood."

Many of the police witnesses are quite against the suggested transfer. Let me quote one or two.

Major Poulton, Chief Constable of Berkshire, asked if he would put the casual wards under the Standing Joint Committee, replied (4,772-3) : " I do not think I would be prepared to recommend it. First, because you would be mixing up two authorities—district authorities and county authorities ; you have all the materials at the Workhouses now for dealing with casual tramps ; you have great big kitchens ; you have the regular inmates who are employed in the Workhouse to cook the food, and as far as the extra food that these men get is concerned, a few shillings a week would meet the cost ; and the second cause is, if you put it on the police you are putting it on to a very much over-loaded body. It would increase your police force very much ; it would increase your police expenses. Another thing is, that I do not think that a man because he is poor should come under the police at all, unless he has committed a crime against the law of the land."

Captain Sterne, R.N., Chief Constable of Wiltshire, asked specifically for his opinion as to the casual

wards being under the police, says (1,984): "Well, I would like to have nothing to do with them at all. I think the police have quite enough to do as it is. We are everything now, pretty nearly. . . . It would increase the force; you would have to have men specially appointed for the purpose."

Captain H. J. Despard, Chief Constable of Lanarkshire, formerly Chief Constable of Dewsbury, says (6,898): "I must say I am rather opposed to the police coming into these things. I think that too much police government is a very bad thing."

The objections raised by these gentlemen are worthy of very careful consideration, and need to be set against any advantages which might possibly accrue from the transfer of the casual wards to the police.

On the administrative difficulties I do not propose to dwell, but would merely remark that in the opinion of the leading Workhouse masters of the country, the proposals made by the Committee to rent the wards from the Guardians, and to bath, clothe, and feed the vagrants, would lead to endless friction, and in the majority of the country Unions be quite impracticable. The immediate effect of that would be proposals to erect casual wards in connection with the police stations all over the country, discarding the present buildings altogether, and adding one more heavy burden of debt to the present heavily-laden back.

In the paragraph of the Report to which I am alluding there are two sentences referring to Boards of Guardians and one to officers, to which I want to draw attention before passing on. Speaking of Boards of Guardians, and alluding to vagrancy, the Committee say: "In most cases the Orders of the Local Government Board are evaded, and in many absolutely disregarded." Concerning that statement I would say, that in this part of the country the assertion is not true; and that if it be a true description of the whole

country, it forms one of the gravest indictments that could be drawn up of the impotence of the Local Government Board, and is much more a reason for relieving the Local Government Board of some of its duties than for transferring from the Guardians some of theirs.

The second sentence affecting Boards of Guardians is the closing one of the paragraph, in which the Committee say: That the only common principle which actuates Boards of Guardians in dealing with the casual poor is "the desire to get rid of the vagrant as cheaply as possible."

I protest that such a statement is a gross libel on the Guardians of this country, and is not warranted by any reasonable appreciation of the facts.

The third sentence that I desire to refer to is as follows:—"114. It is, of course, much easier . . . for a Workhouse master or the superintendent of a casual ward to allow vagrants to discharge themselves on the morning after admission without labour than to detain them and insist upon their doing the regulation task of work; and the discretion which is left to the officers with respect to the discharge of certain classes of vagrants, results in a complete variety of practice."

The Committee thus lightly, and without any evidence, insinuate that a large number of the officers named neglect their duty, because it is much easier so to do. I submit that such a mean insinuation, without a tittle of evidence advanced in its support, is unworthy of the gentlemen who have signed this Report. From personal knowledge of many of the officers thus assailed, I feel sure that the discretion vested in them by the Local Government Board is exercised judicially and to the best of their ability, and that it is never wilfully made use of to evade their duty.

The second recommendation to which I want to draw attention is comprised under the head of "Assistance to Work Seekers" (10-13): "Tickets to be issued

by the police to persons who are *bona fide* in search of work ; the ticket to be for a definite route, and available only for a month, with power to police to alter route if satisfied that this is necessary ; the holder of a ticket to be entitled to lodging, supper, and breakfast at the casual ward, and to be able to leave as early as he desires after performing a small task ; the holder of a ticket to have a ration of bread and cheese for mid-day meal given to him on leaving the casual ward in the morning."

Now, with reference to the general recommendation under this head, I want to point out that in the opinion of those best likely to know there is only about 3 per cent. of real work seekers who make use of the casual wards. Hence the special arrangements and machinery recommended are for an infinitesimal number, and the duty of selecting this first class tramp would be an extremely difficult one. This duty is put upon the policeman, and there can be little doubt that in practice little or no selection would be exercised. In the districts where a way-ticket system has been adopted, opinions are much divided as to whether it has done harm or good, and in some of them the tramp nuisance is as bad as it is in any other part of the country. It appears to me of doubtful utility and to be very like setting up a steam-hammer to kill a fly. Nevertheless, if the relieving officer was substituted for the police as the starting point ; if adequate safeguards were provided to prevent the sale or exchange of tickets once issued, I would offer no objection to the scheme portrayed in this paragraph being tried.

We pass now to the third important recommendation of the Committee—viz., the proposal that *labour colonies shall be established* for habitual vagrants (pars. 16-23). Habitual vagrants to be sent to certified labour colonies for detention for not less than six months or more than three years. Such colonies to be certified

by Secretary of State, and generally to be subject to regulations made by him. Councils of counties and county boroughs to have power to establish labour colonies or to contribute to colonies established by other bodies. Exchequer contribution to be made towards cost of maintenance of persons sent to labour colonies. Subsistence dietary to be prescribed. Inmates to have power to earn small sums of money by their work, and by means of canteen to supplement their food allowance. Discharge before conclusion of sentence to be allowed on certain conditions. Industrial as well as agricultural work to be carried on.

There is no doubt that a very large body of opinion is in existence in favour of the establishment in some form or other of labour colonies for habitual vagrants.

Amongst those who have studied the question and amongst those who have come into personal contact with the habitual tramp there is a strong conviction that under present methods and arrangements he is an utterly hopeless character, for whom most drastic measures are needed.

It appears to me to be abundantly established that the great majority of those persons who regularly tramp from town to town and infest the tramp wards and cheap lodging-houses of the country are habitual idlers and loafers who have formed the habit of wandering from place to place, and who have made up their minds that whether they sink or float they will not work.

In order to check, reform if possible, but in any case to detain and deter this horde of parasites, it is proposed to establish labour colonies where they may be detained for periods varying from six months to three years and compelled to work.

Extremely interesting evidence is given as to the operation of such colonies on the Continent. Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland have each experimented with the question, and their experience is

available. There are also the results obtained at our English colonies under the Salvation Army, the Church Army, and the Union for Social Service.

In Holland there are free colonies maintained by a society and intended for the reception of indigent persons, and beggar colonies maintained by the Government for the repression of mendicity. There is one large colony of the latter class where, on some 3,000 acres between 3,000 and 4,000 men of the vagrant class are detained. Professor Mavor says of them: "All have been convicted of begging; a very large proportion are confirmed beggars. They appear to be fibreless and irresponsible to an extreme degree. Forestry, agriculture, and gardening are the employments of the colonists."

In Belgium there is a huge "*depôt de mendicité*" at Merxplas intended for the reception of able-bodied men who are professional beggars or live in a state of vagrancy, and also for certain other classes, such as inebriates, persons convicted of immoral offences, &c. The population of the colony on 1st January 1905 was 5,110. It has shown a steady *increase* since 1890. Most of the inmates are *permanent residents*; at the time of the witnesses' visit *only twenty* of the colonists were *there for the first time*. The work done is land reclamation, farming, and the manufacture of all kinds of articles required in the colony. The Report states: "It seems clear to us that the discipline there has little or no active reformatory effect, and the constant association of so large a number of men of the vagrant class in these conditions cannot fail to have a deteriorating influence on the whole body." The Director says: "The *reformation en masse* of the colonists is then a Utopian enterprise, and it is only exceptionally that we can effect a rescue amongst the social wreckage which forms the basis of the population of the depot." "Once a colonist always a colonist" seems to be perfectly true of this institution. The colony is, however,

effective in clearing the streets of beggars and loafers, and during his term of detention it prevents the colonist from doing harm to the general public.

There are thirty-four labour colonies in Germany, under the management of a charitable association. Admission is voluntary, and of these institutions, Mr Dawson, the chief witness on this subject, says : " It is clear that a labour colony of the German type is of little use for dealing with persons of the tramp class." It is not disciplinary in the coercive sense : it is purely voluntary. Many of this type of colonists come again and again, and are termed "colony loafers." They correspond to the "ins-and-outs" of our English Work-houses. The object of the colonies is to effect some moral reformation ; but it appears that three-fourths of the colonists have been previously imprisoned, and there is no evidence that any substantial improvement results from the time spent in the colonies. In Switzerland there is a compulsory colony or forced labour farm in nearly every canton, and to these colonies a man found begging, or found to have refused work, and declared to be "work shy," may be sent for a period of from three months to two years. These colonies are generally small. The largest does not exceed two hundred inmates, and at that one there is a staff of forty-five, or one foreman to every five inmates. Owing to the work done the net cost is very small. Generally in Switzerland the compulsory labour colonies appear to have been more successful than elsewhere, and no doubt this is largely due to the fact that as they are small institutions the colonists can receive more individual attention.

In our own country, the Salvation Army colony at Hadleigh, the training colony of the Christian Social Service Union at Lingfield, and the colony established by the Central London Unemployed Committee at Hollesley Bay are particularly referred to. But the Committee say: "None of these institutions is intended

primarily for persons actually belonging to the vagrant class ; there is no power of detention, and the conditions are generally superior to what would be desirable in a colony to which habitual vagrants would be committed."

As to the results attained by labour colonies. There are some very important opinions quoted in the Report. Of the Merxplas colony Professor Mavor says : "The Belgian institution seems to me to be simply punitive. The men remain there for a term of years under strict discipline, and in a position in which they are as nearly as possible prevented from doing any harm to themselves or society ; but when they emerge their record precludes their being employed in ordinary industry, and they again fall into the hands of the police, to be sent back to the colony to harder work and a longer term of imprisonment than before."

His general conclusion is as follows : "If the intention is to suppress begging, to clear the tramps from the highways and the beggars from the streets, to hide them away out of sight, to keep them out of mischief, and to compel them to work, then the labour colony may be a means of accomplishing this. If it is intended to provide a refuge for those who have been in prison, and who for that reason are unable to obtain employment, the labour colony is also a means of accomplishing this. It may be worth inquiry whether for these two purposes alone it were not well to establish labour colonies in England."

Of the Dutch colonies Mr Willink says : "The best that can be said for such an institution is that it keeps decently out of sight, and in a condition of animal well-being a class of men who, if not in its keeping or under some other kind of restraint, would, as in England, be a public disgrace and shame, and would also be raising up children to succeed them."

Assuming, then, that we are all convinced that a labour colony of some kind should be established, there

arises the question, By whom should this colony be founded and maintained? The Committee say in the first instance by philanthropic societies, but ultimately by the State. They would empower Councils of Counties and County Boroughs to establish such colonies or to contribute towards their maintenance, and there should be a grant from Government towards their cost. The Poor Law Unions Association suggest that Boards of Guardians should be grouped together for this purpose, and that the management should be in their hands. With this latter view I hope we shall all agree. The County Councils are already very much overburdened, and I have seen no sufficient reason given why this work could not be very well done by a joint Committee of Guardian Boards. But to whatever body the duty is assigned it should be mandatory and not merely enabling. If the evil of vagrancy is to be fought with and overcome, it will not have to be left to philanthropy and to permissive action, but to resolute concerted action on the part of all the districts concerned. With the detailed suggestions as to management it is impossible to deal here, but there are two points that I would just refer to, viz., buildings and diet. The Committee strongly recommend that the utmost economy should be exercised in the provision of buildings, and that as much as ever possible should be done by the colonists themselves.

Having regard to the manner in which Government Departments have, by their regulations and procedure, enormously increased the cost of asylums and public buildings generally, it strikes one as somewhat humorous for a Committee almost entirely composed of Government officials to strongly recommend economy in this direction. Let us hope that the suggestion will have its effect in the proper quarter.

Now as to diet. It has not hitherto been supposed that casual wards have been managed extravagantly in the matter of diet, but in the light of the Com-

mittee's remarks on this head it is very evident that Guardians have still a great deal to learn. It has generally been understood that the cost of the food supplied to casuals works out at about 3d. or 4d. a head per day. The Committee recommend a diet superior to what is now supplied, and at present contract prices it works out at 7½d. per head per week.

For the labour colonies a much superior menu is suggested, giving four different dinners in the course of a week, and the cost of this at contract prices is put down at 1s. 4½d. per head per week. It is evident that there is room here for making considerable savings, and enterprising Boards of Guardians might be experimenting with these dietaries in anticipation of the time when labour colonies will be established.

In one of the closing paragraphs of the Report it is stated that the great objection to the present system is that it makes no attempt to reform the vagrant, and it is declared that the whole history of vagrancy indicates that the vagrant cannot be suppressed.

The Committee advocate the establishment of labour colonies in the hope, primarily, of supplying that which the present system lacks. In the face of the unanimous testimony both of visitors and those who are at the centre of the Dutch and Belgian colonies, this seems extraordinary optimism on the part of the Committee—optimism which, although we cannot share, we must admire, and although we may not join with them in their expectation that they will be able to instil into the confirmed vagrant habits of work we may be disposed to support their proposal on the other ground upon which they urge its adoption, viz.,—"To protect the public from the trouble and the nuisance which he causes, to prevent children being trained in his habits, and to deter others from adopting this life."

In concluding this paper I should like to remark that in my opinion vagrancy has two principal feeders

or roots, one is to be found in the natural tendency, desire, or disposition there is in every man to wander abroad and see the world in which he lives, and the second is the desire to be free from every kind of restraint;—"to be at a loose end." We must not forget that there are aspects under which the former of these dispositions has a great educational value. If it be governed and controlled and directed to useful ends, the man who has travelled and seen the world is a better man than he who has always stayed at home; but the mere aimless, gaping wanderer from town to town and place to place does good to no one and ends in a chronic indisposition to work and a determination to live on society at large.

The vagrant could not exist for a day were it not for the thoughtless, aimless charity of the great bulk of the people. The *real* cause of vagrancy is the indiscriminate dole-giving which prevails, and if once the great body of the people could be persuaded to refrain from giving to mere promiscuous beggars at the door or by the wayside there would be no need for casual wards or labour colonies, and this old and fruitful subject for discussion and consideration would have ceased to trouble the public mind. This of course is something that legislation cannot deal with, although attempts have been made in the past, and we are told that there are in Germany and Switzerland to-day laws which impose a penalty on those who give alms to beggars. One can only hope by the spread of education and information, and by the provision of adequate help for the really necessitous and deserving to dry up some of these springs which go to swell this great river.

In closing I desire to express high appreciation of the work done by the Committee.

They have got together a valuable body of opinion and information upon a subject of the first importance

to the well-being of our country, and they have made many very valuable and useful suggestions for dealing with the problem.

I think it is a pity that they have made the suggestions as to the transfer of the casual wards to the police. I think those suggestions are made on insufficient grounds and without adequate reason; and if those recommendations be disregarded, there is much in their Report that should go far to diminish vagrancy, and mark the beginning of a new era in the history of this question.

DISCUSSION.

Miss SIDDONS (Huddersfield) confessed that she was a little bit disappointed with the paper. Personally, she would have been more pleased if Mr Rigby had referred to the condition of the women and children vagrants. As Guardians they were glad to know that the number of women and children vagrants had diminished very considerably, but still they were often distressed and saddened at the sight of poor little children who were dragged from place to place by their vagrant parent, often in the worst of weather, over worse roads, and in the worst possible conditions. She would have been glad to hear some expression of opinion as to how this state of things could be improved. "I have sometimes thought," she added, "that it would be well if Guardians were to exercise the powers which they possess, and also obtain more powers, if necessary, and take over the control and management of children from parents, only, however, in cases where the mode of life of the parents proves that they are unfit to have the care of their children." Possibly, however, that point might be a subject for some future discussion.

Mr F. W. MEE (Hunslet) thought it was a monstrous shame that women and children should be allowed to be dragged about the country in order to arouse the sympathy of the charitable public. On 1st January this year there were 887 women and 188 children in the casual wards of the Hunslet Workhouse. The number of children was much smaller than he imagined would have been the case, but it must be remembered that the number was infinitely greater in the common lodging-houses. It was no uncommon practice for tramps to come into the vagrant wards and send their women and children into lodging-houses. Whatever was done in the way of labour colonies, or other branches of reform, male tramps ought not to be allowed to take women and children about with them. At the

present time two women and a child were going about Yorkshire. The elder woman was aged sixty, her daughter, whose age was thirty or thirty-five, was illegitimate, and so was the child. The old woman had been travelling the roads for thirty or forty years, and both the daughter and the granddaughter were born "on the road." Until, at least, a generation had passed and women and children were prohibited from tramping the roads, it was obvious that vagrancy would not be diminished. Of the women and men who frequented the vagrant wards 50 per cent. were under forty-five years of age. He agreed with Mr Rigby that begging was a great encouragement to tramps, and it would be a kindness if the charitable public who listened to the appeals of the beggars, would harden their hearts, in spite of the menaces which often accompanied these appeals. As regarded the way-ticket system, that might be applied, not only to men who were seeking work, but to all tramps who did not mind a day's detention. If that kind of man was kept on the move he would get tired of the life, and the sooner he got tired the better it would be for the community.

Mr BLACKBURN (Tadcaster) said the Vagrancy Committee had overlooked a very important factor in the making of tramps. Our cities and large towns manufactured tramps daily by letting youths sell newspapers and matches and all kinds of things in the streets, instead of learning some useful trade. Our municipalities ought to take this matter up. Thousands in Leeds, he said, knew nothing, and never would know anything. They would ultimately help to fill the prisons and workhouses.

Mr STURDY (Leeds) said they might get uniformity of administration under the police, but he was not in favour of it. Whatever he might be, the vagrant was not a criminal. Mr Rigby had shown that in Manchester the vagrant could be dealt with on humane lines, and if in Manchester why not elsewhere. When a man got to be forty years of age he was too old for some places, and after he was dismissed, it was very difficult for him to get work again, and so he had to tramp the country and eventually seek the shelter of the vagrant ward. That could be prevented if employers of labour were to consider their men more as men and in a more brotherly spirit. When their prosperity increased they should allow their workpeople to share in it. "We have," continued the speaker, "in connection with our licensing system a three-mile limit affecting the Sabbath. In my opinion it is altogether wrong. A man begins to tramp on Sundays three miles to get a drink, then he gets the tramping habit, and we ought to strike against that sort of thing." The housing problem was also an element to be considered.

Mr HUNTER (Hull) said that intemperate habits largely contributed to vagrancy. An effort should be made by means of missions in workhouses to lead the tramps to a higher notion of life. This had been done in Hull by means of workhouse missionaries with good results.

Mr SHAW (Hunslet), speaking as the secretary of a large trade's union—one of the largest in the world, the Society of Engineers—said that if *Guardians* would give a little more encouragement to trades' unions it was very probable that vagrancy would be considerably decreased. The Union to which he was connected was now supporting over five thousand men, and but for that probably some of them would be in the Workhouse, if not tramping the country. He would not say that all employers did not encourage such work, but still there were a great many who spoke detrimentally of trades' unions. "We have," he said, "a way-ticket system in connection with our organisation, and the Government would do well to adopt something like it. Then we have a report of the state of labour market in our particular department of work, which I know is much more complete than the *Labour Gazette*. That report is distributed to every town in the country, and denotes exactly where employment may be found." Thus the engineering workmen could be sent, as they were being sent every day, to where work was to be got. He complained that the churches and charitable agencies never seemed to consider a man's condition when he was just on the brink of the abyss. They waited until he got over the border and into the vagrant class, and then they applied all their resources in order to restore him. But by that time the man had lost almost all hope, and it was much more difficult than before to get him to make an effort for himself. He said that the Workmen's Compensation Act had not been an unmixed blessing. There was not the least doubt that in consequence of that Act men were thrown out of work at an earlier age than formerly. But that could be prevented. He did not want to speak of Socialism, but if the State had charge of the compensation fund instead of insurance companies, there would not be the same pressure brought upon employers to discharge men who were getting past their best days. At present it was the insurance companies that came down upon the employers and said: "You must discharge this man. There is danger of him 'happening an accident.'" The idea of making casual wards more repressive was no cure. It would only mean sending the tramps somewhere else, and would not be getting at the root of the matter. Reform was needed, not repression.

Mr E. GREEN (Hunslet) said that after all only a small proportion of the people of the country were tramps. But the question they had to consider was how best to get rid of them, not to abuse masters or advertise trades' unions. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) He believed that the law already in existence should be more rigidly enforced, and that the species should not be multiplied by women being dragged about the country by male tramps. He discriminated as much as anybody between the genuine work-seeker and the tramp.

Mr SMITH (Sheffield) observed that Miss Siddons had hit the mark when she said that the only way to tackle this problem was to rescue the women and children.

Mr P. H. BAGENAL (Local Government Board Inspector) said that Mr Rigby had not alluded to what he considered was the main plank in the Committee's Report, which consisted in the proposition that the area of chargeability was at present too small. The main proposal which they put forward for the reform of the present administration of the tramp laws was that instead of the Union the county should deal with tramps. That was the only point which Mr Rigby's paper missed. The main reason for the failure of the administration hitherto was that several Unions had had to deal with these tramps instead of a large number or combination of Unions. Mr Rigby, he believed, was unduly exercised about what the Committee gave utterance to, namely, that the common principle which actuated Boards of Guardians in dealing with the casual poor was the desire to get rid of the vagrant as cheaply as possible. "I am here to say," proceeded the speaker, "that every Board of Guardians I have had anything to do with has always stated that to be their desire. I appeal to any Board of Guardians in Yorkshire, and I will venture to say there would not be a dissentient member of these Boards to the proposition that if they could get rid of the tramps altogether they would do so. (Hear, hear.) After all, it is no wonder that they want to get rid of them. The great difficulty is how to do so. At present they only hand them on to another Union. Whilst on this point I want to bring before you just for a moment the state of the Leeds area. I have made out a little diagram of concentric circles, with a radius of eighteen or nineteen miles of Leeds. In the first radius of five miles there are four tramp wards, namely, in Holbeck, Leeds, Hunslet, and Bramley. You could not have a better illustration of the neglect and want of uniformity in dealing with tramp wards than in these four Unions. There is a brand new system with splendid wards in Leeds; another new set at Hunslet. At Bramley there is practically no accommodation, and at Holbeck it is the same. The tramps in this area of Leeds go from one Union to another, round and round. In London the whole of the city is the area of chargeability. That is an example of what the four Boards of Guardians should do in Leeds, by making the city one area."

Mr Bagenal, continuing, said that Mr Rigby had complained that the Committee insinuated too much when they said it was much easier for a Workhouse porter to discharge a vagrant after a short task than to keep him for two nights. It was a well-known fact that where a new officer was appointed the tramps sent some well-known rough to intimidate him. Continuing, he said he quite agreed that the beginning of the tramp was just as much with the children who sold newspapers, and in the loafer at the street corners, as it was with anything else. He had been surprised over and over again in coming from the Leeds railway stations that the municipality did not long ago pass some bye-law to try to diminish the number of children, girls and boys, who ostensibly sold matches, but who really begged. That was one crying evil of the city of Leeds. He had seen girls of

fourteen and fifteen outside the station pretending to sell matches but he was very much afraid that this life was only the beginning of a life of crime and immorality. In conclusion he said that he hoped the Committee's Report would not meet with undue opposition.

Mr RUSSELL of York regarded indiscriminate charity as the greater factor in keeping tramps in the country.

Mr E. A. RIGBY, in replying to the discussion, quite agreed with Miss Siddons that Guardians might do much more to remove vagrant children from the road by putting into force the powers at present possessed under the Acts of 1889 and 1899, which set forth that a child might be taken and cared for if it could be shown that the "mode of life" of its parent was detrimental to its welfare. He thought that phrase was specially coined to include the vagrant parent. But how many Boards were willing to take upon their shoulders the burden of maintaining vagrant children? In view of this reluctance on the part of Guardians, he thought something ought to be done through the Home Office in order that a grant may be made from the Imperial Exchequer, to the extent of two-thirds, say, or in some cases the whole, of the cost. He was rather sorry, he added, to cross swords with Mr Bagenal, but one cause for the insufficient accommodation for tramps was that country Unions regarded the tramp as a national pauper, who ought to be maintained by the nation, and the proposal of a National Poor Law Officers' Association was that a grant should be made for them from the Imperial Exchequer. That would go far to solve the administrative problem. As to the area of chargeability, he had not overlooked the fact that the Unions in some of the big cities co-operated, and he hoped that Leeds would take the Inspector's hint, and combine. With regard to the scheme for the establishment of labour colonies, his point was that they could be managed very well by the Guardians, and that the work need not be handed over to the County Councils, who already had a great deal more than they could do. (Hear, hear.) He felt strongly that this was a case where Guardians ought not to hand over their powers, but, on the contrary, should go in for extension. With all respect, he differed from the Inspector and from the Vagrancy Committee in saying that the only common principle that actuated Boards of Guardians was a desire to get rid of the tramp. They did not wish to shift their burdens on to some one else, at least that was the principle that actuated good Boards. Magistrates, on the other hand, often dismissed a beggar on his promising to leave the town. (Laughter.) But that did not solve the problem. He believed that there were hundreds of Boards of Guardians who were trying loyally to carry out the regulations of the Local Government Board. (Hear, hear.)

On the motion of Mr Mallinson, seconded by Mr R. H. Winter, a vote of thanks was passed to those who contributed papers; and a similar compliment was paid to the President, on the motion of Mr F. H. Bentham, seconded by Mr Blackburn.

At the close of the morning session, the Conference transacted its annual business. It was decided to hold the next annual Conference at Bridlington, and it was suggested to the Executive Committee by Mr E. A. Rigby that the Conference should be held in the month of June. The Executive Committee was re-elected, with the addition of the Chairman and Clerk of the Hunslet and Bridlington Unions. Mr T. Smith, Clerk to the Ecclesall Bierlow Union, was appointed Secretary in the place of Mr J. E. Helmsley, Clerk to the North Bierley Union; and the following were appointed to serve on the Central Conference Committee—Mr F. H. Bentham, Bradford; Miss Siddons, Huddersfield; and Mr S. J. Gower, Hull.

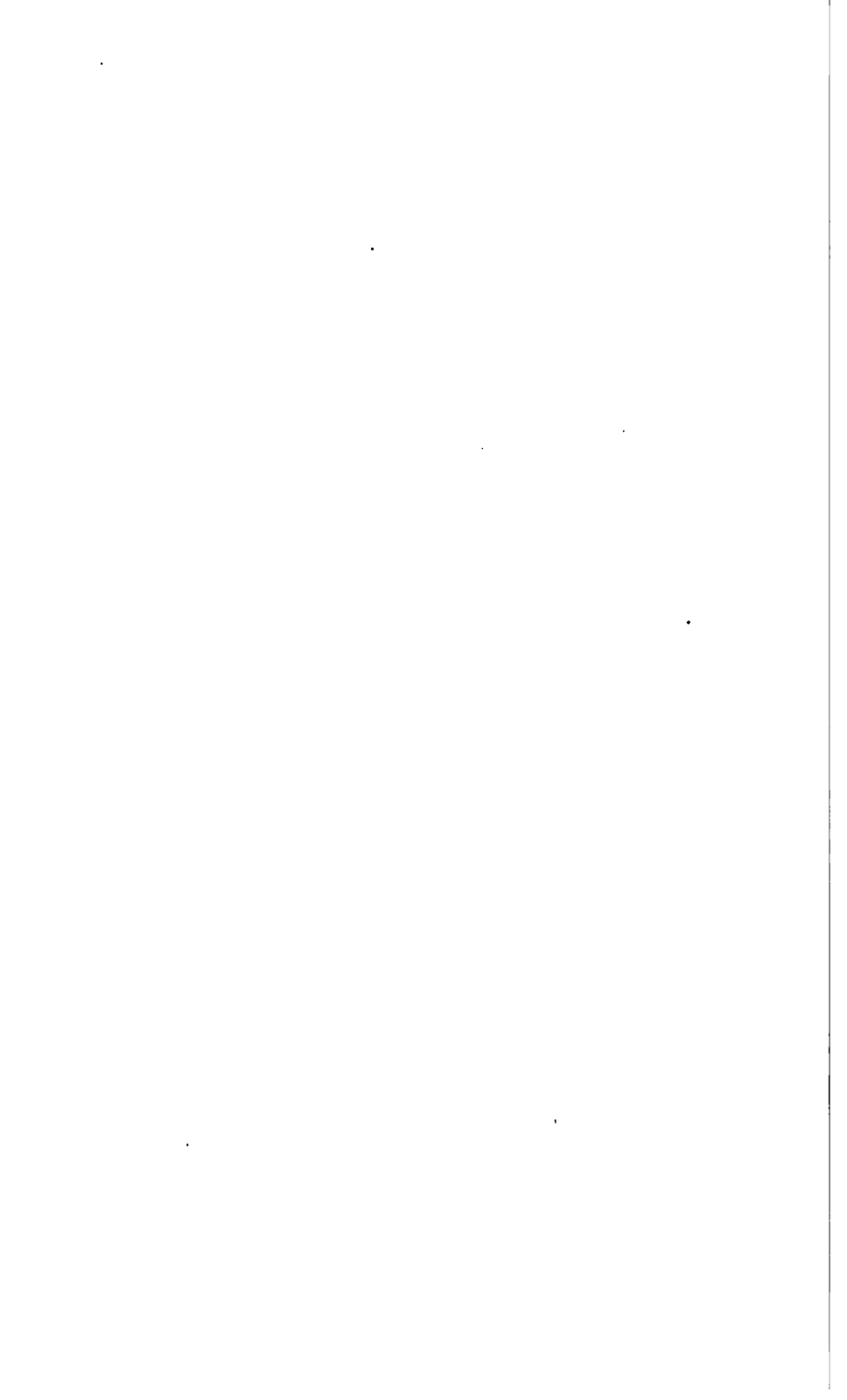
The PRESIDENT moved a hearty vote of thanks to Mr Helmsley for his services as Secretary during the past eight years. His had been a labour of love, and he had rendered his services quite gratuitously. He was quite sure they all appreciated the work which Mr Helmsley had done during his long term of office.

Mr J. H. FORD (Clerk to the Leeds Board) seconded the vote of thanks. He was sure that the Conference did not know the amount of work Mr Helmsley had done, and how great had been the services he had rendered so ungrudgingly.

Mr R. H. WINTER (Hull) expressed his appreciation of Mr Helmsley's gratuitous services to the Conferences during his term of office.

Mr THOMAS SMITH, the new Secretary, also referred in eulogistic terms to the late Clerk's work. He (the speaker) knew what a vast amount of work attached to the office, and he hoped that he should carry out the various duties as well as Mr Helmsley had done. The resolution was enthusiastically adopted, and Mr Helmsley briefly returned thanks.

At the conclusion of the business, the delegates took tea with the Lord Mayor in his rooms.



South-Eastern and Metropolitan Districts.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

THIRTY-SECOND ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE SOUTH-EASTERN AND METROPOLITAN DIS-
TRICTS (INCLUDING THE WEST HAM UNION,
ESSEX), HELD AT THE ROYAL UNITED SERVICE
INSTITUTION, WHITEHALL, LONDON, ON THURS-
DAY AND FRIDAY, 29TH AND 30TH NOVEMBER
1906.

President—MR EDMOND H. WODEHOUSE, C.B.

The following subscribing Unions and Parishes were represented at the Conference :—

LONDON (32 Unions).

BETHNAL GREEN—

Inkhoff, W.
Farebrother, W. A., J.P., M.D.
James, Miss.

CAMBERWELL—

Bale, Mrs S. M.
Morris, Mrs E.
Wilson, Rev. R. H.

FULHAM—

Proper, Rev. P. S. G. (Chairman).
Miles, Miss M. E.
Rule, G.
Wall, S. R.
Mott, E. J. (Clerk).

ST GEORGE'S-IN-THE-EAST—

Cowie, Miss.

HAMMERSMITH—

Graves, M.
Lamb, J.

HAMPSTEAD—

Nevison, Mrs M. W.

LONDON—*Continued.*

HOLBORN—

Canney, Miss M.
Garrity, E.

ISLINGTON—

Barrett, Mrs M.

KENSINGTON—

Alexander, Miss.
Fleming, Sir Francis, K.C.M.G.
Wilde, Miss.
Stephens, W. R. (Clerk).

LAMBETH—

Fielder, F.
Matthews, Miss J.

ST PANCRAS—

Idris, Miss E.
Miall-Smith, Mrs H. C.
Wellabda, W. J.

STEPNEY—

Barker, Alderman.
Harper, Councillor J. W.

LONDON—*Continued.*

STRAND—

Brown, G. S.
Evans, Mrs. M.
Rudderforth, W. H. G.

WHITECHAPEL—

Murphy, Rev. P. J. (Vice-Chairman).
Brown, Jas., J. P.
Tootell, F. J. (Clerk).

BERKS (12 Unions).

ABINGDON—

Clutterbuck, Rev. F. C. (Chairman).
B. Challoner.

BRADFIELD—

Sousley, J. (Chairman).
Petrocokino, A.
Waddington, Maj.-Gen.
Willink, H. G. (Chairman).

MAIDENHEAD—

Cox, C. W., J. P.
Wyath, T. G.

READING—

Burt, D. V.
Cook, G. W.
Fairer, E. V.
Mobbs, A.
Moring, F. E.
Winter, G.
Huggins, E. J. W. (Clerk).

WALLINGFORD—

King, J. P. (Chairman).
Bliss, W.

SOUTHAMPTON (26 Unions).

ALVERSTOKE—

Rogers, R. H.
Savage, A.

DROXFORD—

Briggs, C.
Lawrance, A. L.

HARTLEY WINTNEY—

Hitchcock, A.

PORTSMOUTH—

Simpson, J. (Chairman).
H. L. Woodeson (Vice-Chairman).
Mitchell, E. H. (Clerk).

KENT (26 Unions).

WEST ASHFORD—

Batchelor, J.
Brown, A., J. P.
Harrison, Rev. A. H.
Missing, H.
Langley, G. (Clerk).

BROMLEY—

Bowman, W.
Grant, C.
Hadriell, H. J.
Hall, Mrs.
Hoyer, M. A.

DOVER—

Carder, E. (Clerk).

EASTRY—

Rice, H. E. H.
Thomas, Rev. W. C.

ELHAM—

Boyd, G.
Franks, G. S.

FAVERSHAM—

Cobb, F. B.
Brandett, G.

MAIDSTONE—

Lowray, J. R.
Stiles, G.
Post, F. (Assistant Clerk).

MALLING—

J. F. Wheeler (Chairman).
Hawley, Rev. Canon.
Allison, F. J. (Clerk).

MEDWAY—

Billinghurst, E. A. (Chairman).
Tomlin, H.
Vinall, S.
Willmott, E.

STROOD—

Povey, J. E. (Clerk).

ISLE OF THANET—

Cook, G. G.

SURREY (11 Unions).

CHERTSEY—

Martin, J.

CROYDON—

Shirley, G. J. (Chairman).
Bray, W. T., R.N.
Drew, Miss R. M.
Mennell, Miss.
List, H. (Clerk).

SURREY—Continued.

GODSTONE—

Cook, Miss C. E.
Gill, Miss C. M.

EPSOM—

Braithwaite, B.
Brown, W. S. J.
Shaw, Rev. J., C.C.

FARNHAM—

Latham, Morton (Chairman).
Pain, Mrs A. C.
Stevens, Mrs.
Whitehead, W.

GUILDFORD—

Cox, W., sen.
Evans, W. H.
Foster, Edmond.
Powell, H. A.

HAMLETON—

Chance, Sir W., Bart.

SURREY—Continued.

RICHMOND—

Cook, W. J.
Goldney, Rev. S.
Langdon, H.
Raggett, M.
Trower, W. H.

SUSSEX (21 Unions).

CUCKFIELD—

Weekes, A.

EASTBOURNE—

Brodie-Hall, Miss.
Marchant, D.
Raikes, Rev. E.
Hurst, A. (Clerk).

HASTINGS—

Collins, J. N.

THAKEHAM—

Goode, C. H.
Palmer, Rev. H.

WESTHAMPTON—

Kelly, Rev. W. W.
Lovell, H., J.P.

The following subscribing Unions do not appear to have been represented at the Conference :—City of London, Paddington, Poplar, Newbury, Kingsclere, Folkestone.

The following Unions did not appoint Delegates to the Conference :—

LONDON.—Bermondsey, Chelsea, St George's, St Giles and St George, Greenwich, Hackney, Lewisham, St Marylebone, Mile-End Old Town, Shoreditch, Southwark, Wandsworth, Westminster, Woolwich, and West Ham.

BERKSHIRE.—Easthampstead, Faringdon, Hungerford and Ramsbury, Wantage, Windsor, Wokingham.

SOUTHAMPTON.—Alresford, Alton, Andover, Basingstoke, Catherington, Christchurch, Fareham, Fordingbridge, Havant, Hursley, Lymington, New Forest, Petersfield, Ringwood, Romsey, South Stoneham, Southampton, Stockbridge, Whitchurch, Isle of Wight, Winchester.

KENT.—East Ashford, Blean, Bridge, Canterbury, Cranbrook, Dartford, Gravesend and Milton, Hollingbourne, Hoo, Milton, Romney Marsh, Sevenoaks, Sheppey, Tenterden, Tonbridge.

SURREY.—Dorking, Kingston, Reigate.

SUSSEX.—Battle, Brighton, Chichester, East Grinstead, East Preston, Hailsham, Horsham, Lewes, Midhurst, Newhaven, Petworth, Rye, Steyning, Ticehurst, Uckfield, Westbourne.

VISITORS.

Ashwin, Rev. Dr Hamilton.
Bateman, C.
Brabrook, Sir E. W., C.B.
Brown, Alex.
Carter, E. F.
Clark, Col. Gerard.
Clay, Sir Arthur, Bart.

Cropper, Hon. Mrs.
Dalgetty, G.
Downes, A. H.
Downes, Mrs.
Drinkwater, G.
Egerton, Hon. Mrs Charles.
Fleming, Baldwin.

VISITORS—*Continued.*

Foster, Miss.	Morshead, Mrs.
Franks, T. S.	Paget, Miss Rowland.
Gertlens, Miss.	Palmer, Thos.
Harwood, A. R.	Peakwood, A.
Herbert, N.	Pell, Miss.
Jacobs, Mrs.	Philp, Miss F. Penrose.
King, Miss A. J.	Powell, Mrs.
Lloyd-Baker, G. E.	Stansfield, Miss.
Mason, Miss.	Strahan, Mrs.
Milligan, D.	Stone, Miss.
Mitchell, A. C.	Warren, C. H.
Morriss, C.	Zanetti, Miss.

Vice-Presidents and co-opted members present (not as Guardians).—Sir W. Bousfield, Mr James Brown, Mr W. Vallance.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
THE BEST MEANS OF DEALING WITH THE VAGRANT POOR.	
By Mr E. J. MOTT, <i>Clerk, Fulham Board of Guardians</i>	546
THE VAGRANT POOR. By Mr H. G. WILLINK, <i>Chairman, Bradfield Board of Guardians</i>	561
OUTDOOR MEDICAL RELIEF. By Mr MORTON LATHAM, <i>Chairman, Farnham Board of Guardians</i>	595
NURSING OF THE OUTDOOR POOR. By Miss AMY HUGHES, <i>General Superintendent, Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses, London</i>	605

THURSDAY, 29TH NOVEMBER.

The HON. SECRETARY stated that apologies for absence from the meeting had been sent by the following:—Mrs Fuller (Corsham), Alderman Southworth (Grimsby), Mr J. E. Helmsley (Bradford), Miss Hall Hall (Witley)), Right Hon. Sir J. T. Hibbert, Mr H. J. Hagger (Liverpool), Miss Evans, Mr Ferrers Howell (Exeter), Mr R. J. Parr (N.S.P.C.C.), Right Hon. J. Burns, M.P., Mr Seebohm Rowntree (York), Mr F. W. B. Cripps (Cirencester), Sir S. B. Provis, K.C.B., Mr Geo. Craighill, Mrs Leach, Mr R. J. Curtis, J. Congreve (Cambridge), Mrs Barnett, Mr E. Bond, Mr A. J. Harris, and others.

The HON. SECRETARY read the Committee's Report as follows:

REPORT OF COMMITTEE.

Your Committee again present a satisfactory Annual Report. The last Conference was an interesting one, the papers read and the discussions thereon being good and practical; we owe many thanks to the readers and speakers, and there is no doubt that, with our large audience of those specially interested in the questions discussed, either as experts or as having constantly to deal with these questions practically, public opinion, both official and lay, is very considerably influenced by our meetings.

The number of Unions represented at the Conference last year was 58 in all, 19 from London and 39 from the Provinces, this year

the numbers are 51, 17 and 34 respectively. A copy of the duly audited Balance-Sheet was sent to all Boards of Guardians in our district with the letter of invitation to the Conference; it showed that a balance of £6. 10s. 7d. remained in hand after all the expenses of the last Conference were paid.

We are again most fortunate in our President, Mr Edmond H. Wodehouse, C.B., having consented to take the Chair for the second time. His peculiar fitness for the post was shown most clearly last year by his eloquent and very suggestive address, which cannot fail to have weight with those in all positions most interested in the working of the Poor Law; and we are convinced that our Conferences are of great value not only to those who are helping to carry out that Law, but to the whole community.

The next business was the election of the Conference Committee, which resulted as follows:—

LONDON.—Mr G. Howlett, Mrs E. Morris, and Rev. P. S. G. Propert.

BERKS.—Rev. F. C. Clutterbuck, Mr J. P. King, and Mr J. Suttie.

HANTS.—Sir R. Rycroft, Bart., Mr Albert Savage, and Mr J. Simpson.

KENT.—Mr E. J. Allison, Mr F. B. Cobb, and Mr H. E. H. Rice.

SURREY.—Mr B. Braithwaite, Mrs A. C. Pain, and Mr H. A. Powell.

SUSSEX.—Miss Brodie-Hall, Mr F. Tuppeney, and Mr A. Weekes.

The representatives of the district on the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences were re-elected:—

Miss Brodie-Hall (Eastbourne).

Rev. P. S. G. Propert (Fulham).

Mr H. G. Willink (Bradfield).

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—In considering the subject to which at the opening of this Conference I might most usefully invite your attention, it has occurred to me that the most useful subject might perhaps be the one which was also most obvious, so obvious indeed that I should always have it before my eyes, the subject, I mean, of a Poor Law Conference. Conferences such as that which is here gathered together have now been held in the various Poor Law districts of England and Wales for a considerable number of years, and I think that the time has come when it may be both possible and useful to take stock (so to speak) of the position which these Conferences now occupy, and to consider how far they have succeeded, and in what respects they have failed of success in achieving the objects towards which their aims and efforts have been directed.

In order, however, to do this it is necessary to form as clear an idea as we can of what those aims and objects have been. It is difficult, if not impossible, to describe them in precise and definite

terms, and that for more reasons than one. In the first place it has been one of the most distinctive features of these Conferences, and one which has in a very large degree enhanced their utility, that the expression of all shades of opinion has been welcomed at them, and that a fair and candid hearing has always been given to the exponents of the most diverse views. And another reason is that it has not generally been thought advisable to embody the views of the majority in formal resolutions arrived at by a division of the members at the close of a debate. The opinions of a Conference can, therefore, only be arrived at by a perusal of the papers read and the speeches delivered by its members. Without attempting any precise definition, I will endeavour to express in general terms what appear to me to have been the principal aims and objects of these Conferences, and I will try to do so by reference to that which is still the principal Act under which Guardians of the Poor are called on to administer the law, I mean the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834. I hope I may carry with me the assent of the large majority of the members of this Conference if I say that the opinion—I do not, of course, mean the unanimous but the largely preponderating and predominant opinion—of these Conferences in regard to the Act of 1834 has been, that while no doubt susceptible after the lapse of more than seventy years of salutary amendment in some of its details, yet the Act of 1834 was in its broad and general principles a wise and statesmanlike measure, and that it would have been better for the community at large, better for the ratepayers, better far above all in the truest interests of the labouring poor of this country, if the principles of that Act had been more uniformly and more continuously followed, and its provisions administered in accordance with the spirit and intention of those by whom that Act was framed.

If I am right, then, in regarding the promotion of a careful and discriminating administration of the Poor Law in accordance with the principles of that Act as being one of the chief aims of these Conferences, how far have they achieved success, and to what extent and in what respects have they failed. That much good has resulted from their labours it is impossible to doubt. Those members of these Conferences who in their various Unions have been endeavouring to promote such an administration of the law as that to which I have referred have, I doubt not, felt that attendance at these Conferences has greatly aided them in their efforts. It has enabled them to strengthen their arguments by illustrations derived from the experience of their brother Guardians in other Unions and to enforce those arguments with the authority, which the knowledge and experience of those who are assembled in these Conferences are so well qualified to afford them.

On the other hand it must, I am afraid, be admitted that there are still many Unions in which the policy indicated by the Act of 1834 has been but feebly and fitfully followed; while there are some in which, even if the letter of the law has been kept, its spirit and

intention have been almost entirely ignored. If you were to select two Unions, in one of which the administration was most strict, and the other in which it was most lax, and were to take a foreigner or the inhabitant of another planet to attend a meeting of the Guardians first in one of these Unions and then in the other, he would find it difficult to believe that in each Union the Guardians were nominally administering the same law.

What, then, have been the chief hindrances which have prevented the more complete attainment of the objects which these Conferences have in view?

As I have attempted to describe those objects by reference to an Act of Parliament, I naturally turn first to Parliament, which was the author of that Act, and in particular to the House of Commons, in which that measure was initiated. And I am afraid it must be confessed that many of those who have been endeavouring to promote what you may, if you please, call a strict, but what I should prefer to call a careful and discriminating administration of the Poor Law, have felt that in their difficult and not very popular labours they have received but little support and assistance from the House of Commons; and if the truth is to be told, I am afraid it must be added, that from no quarter of that House have they received less support and assistance than from the two front benches on either side of the House. The debates in the House of Commons when Poor Law subjects have been under discussion—such subjects as the question as to the manner in which applicants for relief who are in receipt of money from benefit clubs should be dealt with; or, again, the question whether the recipients of medical relief should or should not be disqualified from the exercise of the franchise, when subjects such as these have been discussed, the debates in the House of Commons have not appeared to me to be very edifying reading. Such debates have too often taken place in a somewhat bored, a somewhat jaded, and a somewhat empty House at the fag end of a session. I am not now expressing any opinion as to whether the particular alterations of the law to which I have referred, by way of illustration, were right or wrong, wise or unwise, but the point which I wish to submit to you is this, that when a measure has been framed with such elaborate care as that which was bestowed upon the provisions of the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834, it is in the highest degree dangerous for Parliament to tamper with those provisions without a far more thorough and searching consideration of the principles which underlie the measure, and the relation in which the particular details under discussion stand to those principles and to the whole structure of the Act, than Parliament has had, at least in recent years, either the time or the inclination to bestow upon them.

I was reading a short time ago, in Mr MacKay's "History of the English Poor Law," an account of the debate in the House of Commons, on the second reading of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834. That debate was memorable among other things for a speech

delivered by Mr Grote, the eminent historian. Will you allow me to read to you a short extract from that speech? Though Mr Grote was opposed to some of the details of the Bill, he both spoke and voted in favour of the second reading, and he concluded his speech with these words:—

“I know that I have done this at no small risk of favour and popularity to myself; for I understand that a petition was this day presented from my own constituents directed strongly against the passing of this Bill. . . . But so strong is my conviction of the absolute necessity of some large remedial measure as an antidote to the overwhelming evil of pauperism; so firm is my belief of the necessity of some central supervising agency to secure the fulfilment of any salutary provisions which the Legislature may prescribe; so strong is my conviction on these cardinal points—that if it were to cost me the certain sacrifice of my seat, I should feel bound to tell my constituents that I dissented from them, and that I would do my best to promote the attainment of this necessary and, in the main, valuable remedy.”

Well, ladies and gentlemen, you may search the pages of Hansard for the report of any recent speech on Poor Law questions conceived in the spirit which animated that which I have quoted from Mr Grote, but I am afraid that you will search in vain.

Leaving the question of the attitude of the House of Commons on this matter, I pass on to consider the methods by which these Conferences have themselves endeavoured to promote one at least of the objects which they have in view.

I suppose that there is no subject to which Poor Law Conferences have devoted more time, none on which more papers have been read, and none on which more interesting and instructive debates have been held, than that of the large and difficult question of the administration of outdoor relief. Now, there are two main, and, to some extent, distinct lines of argument, by which those who advocate a strict system of administration and the restriction of this form of relief within moderate limits, have sought to make good their position. One of these may be described as the financial or economic argument. This argument has been repeated over and over again, and each succeeding year brings with it fresh illustrations and a fresh set of figures by which this argument may be enforced. And in this respect, the current year has not been less fruitful than its predecessors. For myself, I confess that I am unable to understand how any person with a fair mind and an even moderate acquaintance with the facts and figures relating to the subject can continue to believe that a system of outdoor relief is a cheap system. As long, however, as there remain persons unconvinced upon this point, I suppose the old arguments must continue to be repeated. But, in my opinion, it would be well that greater stress still should be laid upon the other line of argument to which I have referred. After all, it was not mainly with a view to saving the pockets of the ratepayers

that such men as the late Sir B. Leighton in the Atcham Union, or the late Mr Bland Garland in the Bradfield Union, or Mr Albert Pell (still I am glad to say with us) in the Brixworth Union and in the East End of London, devoted so much of their time and their labour towards advocating a strict system in the matter of outdoor relief. What really actuated these men and many others who might be mentioned, was the profound conviction which they entertained that a lax system of outdoor relief was fraught with the most disastrous results to the labouring poor of this country. And it is this aspect of the question on which most stress should, in my opinion, be laid.

There are many who when convinced by, or at any rate finding themselves unable to answer, the financial or economic argument, shift their ground, and say that it may be true that the advocates of a strict system may keep down the rates and diminish the numbers in receipt of relief, but that it does not follow that they succeed thereby in ameliorating the condition of the labouring classes. That argument was answered many years ago by the late Mr Andrew Doyle, one of the ablest men who ever held office under the Poor Law Board, and he answered it in these words:—

“A high rate of pauperism means simply a dependent, ill-paid, and degraded labouring class. In no country in Europe, nor in any part of this kingdom, can you point to the existence of reasonable comfort and prosperity among the labouring classes if any considerable proportion of the people be supported either wholly or in part from the forced contributions of the rest.”

I believe that those words were true when Mr Doyle wrote them more than thirty years ago, and I believe that they are true now.

I should like in passing just to advert to the definition of pauperism which Mr Doyle (who was a master of accurate language) incidentally gives in the passage I have quoted. A pauper does not mean a very poor person. A man may be very poor—he may be so poor that he has nothing whatever of his own—but if he be maintained by his friends or relations, or even by the voluntary aid of strangers, he is not a pauper. You have no right to call him by that name, and, indeed, might possibly render yourself liable to an action for slander if you did so. A pauper is, in Mr Doyle's words, a person who is supported, either wholly or in part, by the forced contributions of the rest of the community. Now the words “pauper” and “pauperism” are no doubt very ugly words, but I am not sure that their very ugliness may not serve a useful purpose if it serves to remind us of the innate ugliness of the things which they denote. Some persons are so desperately afraid of calling a spade a spade that it would almost seem that they were under the impression that by changing the names of things you could change the nature of the things themselves. You cannot do it. Bearing in mind Mr Doyle's definition of pauperism as being the status or condition of being supported either wholly or in part by the forced contributions of the rest of the community, it becomes clear that a pauper child

remains a pauper child still, whether you call the house in which it lives a Workhouse or whether you call it a Cottage Home ; a person who is supported at the cost of the rates or taxes remains a pauper still, whether you call the maintenance which is accorded to him by the name of outdoor relief or whether you call it an old age pension. I am aware that some have thought to get over this difficulty by advocating a system under which all persons above a certain age, whatever their private means may be, should be entitled to a pension. It does not really get over the difficulty, because, so far from diminishing pauperism, it would make all of us paupers, or at least all those who had attained the prescribed age. Even apart from this I am not quite sure that a nation of old age pensioners would entirely satisfy my idea of Utopia.

It is, of course, quite within the power of Parliament to add to or detract from the civil disabilities which are now attached to the condition of pauperism, it may even be possible (whether it would be wise is another matter) to mitigate the social stigma which is now associated with it, but the fundamental nature of pauperism, the fact that it consists in being supported by the forced contributions of the rest of the community, that neither Parliament nor any other body upon earth has the power to alter.

Let me revert for a moment to the argument against a lax system of outdoor relief, which is founded on the injury which it does to the labouring classes. I think that there is much need to insist upon this argument at the present time. The composition of Boards of Guardians is constantly changing, and under the modern system in country districts many of those who seek election do so more with a view to participating in the management of the roads, or taking part in other branches of the work which devolves upon district councils, rather than in the work (at once more important, more difficult, but much less popular) of the administration of the laws relating to the relief of the poor. These district councillors attend the meetings of the Boards of Guardians, they bring to their Poor Law work kind hearts, I doubt not, and heads, for aught I know, as good as their hearts, but they bring with them very little previous knowledge of Poor Law administration. They have read little of the past history of the Poor Law in this country, they know little or nothing of any methods of administration which may prevail in neighbouring Unions, even within the area of their own county, many of them know nothing of any system of administration except that which they find prevailing in the Union in which they have been elected to serve as Guardians. If that happens to be mainly a system of outdoor relief, and if they find, as they certainly will, that their colleagues on the Board who have advocated and administered this system represent themselves, as being and honestly believe themselves to be the friends of the poor, what wonder is it that the newcomers readily fall in with the system they find prevailing, and think that they too in helping to continue it are the friends of the poor. I do not think that these Conferences can possibly be

more usefully occupied than in showing such men that they could not labour under a more complete or more dangerous delusion.

And in the annals of the past history of the Poor Law in this country there has been accumulated a vast mass of evidence by which this may be shown. By the experience of the past you may show them how a too easy system of outdoor relief, by depressing the rate of wages, robs labour of its just reward; how it compels those who, by their utmost exertions, are with difficulty able to secure for themselves an independent maintenance, to contribute indirectly if not directly to a fund out of which wages are subsidised, a factitious competition is fostered, and their own earnings are thereby reduced; how it saps the strength of all the natural incentives to industry and providence; how terribly it has weakened, and still continues to weaken, the sense of the obligation which lies upon parents to maintain their children, and upon children to succour and support their parents. That these and many other evils follow in the train of a lax system of outdoor relief there is ample evidence to prove.

The subject that I have chosen is so large that I am very conscious that I have only been able to touch upon the mere fringe of it. May I, in conclusion, make one practical suggestion for your consideration. The Royal Commission on the Poor Law which is now sitting will issue its report sooner or later. I say sooner or later, but I do not hesitate to say that for my own part I hope that it will be later rather than sooner. I do not believe that a task such as that which has been entrusted to this Commission is one which can be efficiently performed in a hurry. I think that nothing would be more to be regretted than that the Commission should be induced either by the impatience of the public or by pressure from any outside quarter to issue, or even to attempt to frame, their report until they are satisfied that they have made adequate, and indeed exhaustive, inquiry into the multitudinous and complicated facts upon which their report (if it is to be worth anything) must necessarily be based. But when it is issued it will, to my mind, be of primary importance that these Poor Law Conferences should form and express their opinion upon it. There are no other bodies in the country so well qualified by knowledge and experience to judge of the matter, and it will then be a duty which you owe to the country to take care that your voice should be heard, and that it should speak with no uncertain sound. What I wish to suggest is, that in the meantime papers should be read at some future Conferences in this and other districts upon the subject which I have touched upon so inadequately this morning—the subject of Poor Law Conferences and the means by which their organisation may be improved, their influence may be extended, and their utility increased. I think that such papers, and the discussions which would follow them, would be productive of much interest and instruction. I believe that such discussions would not only put you in a better position to deal with the report of the Commission when it appears, but I would even venture to express the

hope that great as have been the benefits which have resulted from these Conferences in the period of about forty years during which they have existed, such discussions might be the means of rendering the results of your labours even more beneficial still in the years which are yet to come.

Mr E. J. MOTT (Fulham) then read the following paper:—

THE BEST MEANS OF DEALING WITH THE VAGRANT POOR IN THE LIGHT OF THE REPORT OF THE DEPART- MENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY.

BY MR E. J. MOTT,

Clerk to the Guardians, Parish of Fulham.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE VAGRANT.

IN advancing civilisations it has always been found that a considerable number of the individuals that go to make up the population are more or less imperfectly adapted for the prevailing conditions of the age in which they live. These fail in some material qualification, and by a process of gravitation find their way to the bottom of the social scale, when public and charitable funds are called upon to maintain them. A period of depressed trade or unfavourable climatic conditions is certain to add to the number, and when the depression or severe weather is of long duration that number steadily rises.

Here, then, we get the destitute poor. Now for the next step. What is the principal cause of a section of this class being converted into vagrants? There may be many factors, but I think the principal reason must be the inadequacy of the relief afforded for actual destitution under the existing regulations of the Local Government Board, and the consequent countenance given to the beggar's claim. The Local Government Board regulations provide for the discharge of the casual poor from the wards after a very limited and

optional detention, but do not provide for their after subsistence. Rightly or wrongly, the Local Government Board assume that the persons using the wards are by means at their disposal in a position to provide for themselves when not in the wards. Guardians, whether they detain for one or two days, in principle follow this assumption, and the persons concerned are consequently sent upon the roads to join the stream of compulsory wanderers. Thus we get the vagrant.

GENERAL CONDITIONS IN THE COUNTRY AND INCREASE IN VAGRANCY.

In the Report of the Vagrancy Committee attention is drawn to the increase in the number of vagrants between the years 1900 and 1904. This leads us to consider what the condition of the country was during that period. It was unquestionably a period of depressed trade—the South African War had temporarily drained the country of capital, work was slack, the pressure upon Trade Union funds and charitable associations exceptionally severe, prisons were crowded, pauperism went up by leaps and bounds, lunatic asylums were full. Bankruptcies, which in 1900 numbered 11,184, increased to 14,730; persons imprisoned for debt went up from 12,375 to 19,217; those imprisoned in default of payment of fines from 78,345 to 107,625. Crime increased. The number of persons committed for trial for indictable offences in 1899 was 50,494; in 1900, 53,628; and in 1904, 59,960. It is significant that this increase in crime was not in respect of offences against the person, but against property. Even the number of persons who deprived themselves of life increased by 36 per cent. within ten years.

With this state of affairs existing in the country generally, is there any cause for wonder that the number of casual poor also increased.

A contributing factor to the increase in vagrancy

is probably to be found in the weakening of the family tie, much of which is directly traceable to comparatively recent legislation. Over 6,000 children were received into reformatories and industrial schools during 1904; 7,763 separation orders were made by magistrates in the same year, which means that over 15,000 persons were practically released from their marriage contracts over and above those whose marriages were dissolved by the High Courts. The number of deserted wives and families in the country must be immense.

On the 1st January of this year 6,819 deserted and other married women, with 18,888 children, were in receipt of Poor Law relief, without their husbands, and 1,703 married men, with 2,806 children, without their wives. The separation of the man from his family under the Unemployed Workmen Act, and the feeding of school children apart from the parents, are part of this movement, the ultimate consequences of which it is impossible to foretell.

Boards of Guardians, of course, became greatly concerned at the increasing number of dependent persons on their hands, and the attention of the Government was drawn to it, particularly to the number of vagrants. These had fluctuated as follows :—

			1st January.	1st July.
1899	-	-	7,499	5,361
1900	-	-	5,579	4,170
1901	-	-	6,795	5,455
1902	-	-	7,840	6,609
1903	-	-	8,266	5,121
1904	-	-	8,519	6,748
1905	-	-	9,768	8,556
1906	-	-	9,708	—

APPOINTMENT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE.

The Departmental Committee on Vagrancy was appointed on the 11th July 1904. It consisted of the following :—

Right Hon. J. L. Wharton, M.P., Ripon Division of the West Riding of Yorks, and a Member of the Privy Council—*Chairman.*

Sir William Chance, Bart., a recognised authority on the Poor Laws of England.

- Mr J. S. Davey, C.B., Assistant Secretary and Chief Inspector, Local Government Board.

Dr Downes, Medical Inspector for Poor Law purposes, Local Government Board.

Captain Eardly Wilmot, Inspector of H.M. Prisons.

Captain Showers, Chief Constable of Essex.

Mr H. B. Simpson, Principal Clerk, Home Office.

Secretary—Mr F. L. Turner, Clerk in Offices of Local Government Board.

It will be observed that a majority of the members were Government officials—men of high repute and capabilities—but who, by reason of extensive official experience, had a natural but possibly unconscious bent in favour of a bureaucratic system of Government.

The tendency in this direction is now very marked. There appears to be a distinct movement to guide various branches of Local Government into channels which may lead to a completely centralised system of government in this country. "Uniformity" is the catchword—in its name the system of local management is to be changed. What "co-ordination" did for the education authorities in 1902, "uniformity" may be destined to accomplish for the Poor Law authorities in the near future. The form of government that may be evolved may retain the form of democracy, but the spirit and the substance will be the spirit and the substance of bureaucracy. I will not occupy further space in dealing with this part of the matter except to say that, apart altogether from the merits or demerits of the recommendations of the Committee, the nature thereof need occasion no surprise.

THE REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE.

What, then, do we find in the Report and Recommendations of the Committee? No recognition of the immense difficulties Guardians have had to contend with—not a word of appreciation of their services. The Committee say that, "It is clear to us that the present system neither repels nor reforms the vagrant. It is agreed that the essential condition of success is uniformity of administration, but the evidence is overwhelming to the effect that this object is not attained. The evidence also shows the practical impossibility of obtaining uniformity under the present system. It is clear that this must be the result when the administration is in the hands of over six hundred independent authorities, who are actuated by no common principle, except the desire to get rid of the vagrant as cheaply as possible. We are forced to the conclusion that an essential condition of any reform in the present system of the relief of vagrants is an extension of the area of chargeability and management, and the substitution for the Guardians of some other authority who will administer the law on uniform lines and be subject to central control. We are of opinion that this can best be effected by the substitution of the police authority for the Poor Law authority as the body responsible for the local relief of vagrants and the management of of casual wards."

QUESTION OF UNIFORMITY.

The Committee make much of this question of uniformity. It is the principal argument upon which their central recommendation is based. Now what is the evidence on this point? The first thing noticeable is that in the multitude of figures, statements, &c., included in the appendix, there is not one that discloses the actual state of affairs, or that enables one to ascer-

tain where the regulations as to detention are not observed, and what the effect of it appeared to be. Statements of the increase or decrease in the country generally are not sufficient. What was wanted was one relating to each Union, showing the numbers admitted, length of detention, &c., over a period of years. It could have been very easily prepared, and would have proved more useful in arriving at a clear understanding of the subject than many of those submitted.

The following figures in respect of the parish of Fulham are instructive :—

PARISH OF FULHAM.

Number of Vagrants relieved, &c.

Year ending Midsummer.	Men.	Women.	Children.	Total.	Discharges after Admission.				
					1st Day.	2nd Day.	3rd Day.	4th Day.	5th Day.
1901	2,142	495	74	2,711	635	1,743	217	57	36
1902*									
1903	2,386	419	99	2,904	707	1,868	197	45	21
1904	3,562	486	59	4,107	808	2,824	322	51	28
1905	5,240	985	85	6,310	636	4,641	825	117	43
1906	5,860	1,399	98	7,357	109	5,654	985	432	111

Year ending Midsummer.	Transfers.			
	Workhouse.	Infirmary.	Police.	Absconded.
1901	—	15	5	3
1902*				
1903	12	29	21	4
1904	12	37	20	5
1905	6	19	17	6
1906	11	28	23	4

It will be observed that the more detention was enforced the greater the number of casual poor relieved.

* Wards used during part of year for isolation of smallpox suspects.

In towns where common lodging-houses and cheap shelters abound it is impossible to say where the line between the vagrant and other destitute poor is to be drawn, so that overlapping and confusion can be but the inevitable result of the suggested change, in place of that uniformity of which the Committee expect so much. If the casual wards are to be handed over to the police the Guardians cannot be entirely released from responsibility in connection with the casual poor so that the work would therefore be in the hands, not of one authority—not even of the two hundred police authorities—but, including Boards of Guardians, of over eight hundred authorities. If uniformity of treatment is a remedy this will not secure it. Uniformity, attractive, specious, desirable as it may appear, is at the same time very delusive, and does not carry the Committee very far. As the basis for an argument for the restriction of Local Government it might serve, but for the suppression of vagrancy it is not of itself sufficiently substantial. In dealing with human life in a vagrant state, pressure at one place will only cause it to bulge at another. If the pressure is put on uniformly it might have the effect (but not necessarily) of more evenly distributing the number of vagrants. It appears to me that what the Vagrancy Committee want to imply is that if pressure is put on evenly and hard enough vagrancy can be crushed out altogether.

It is interesting at this point to read the separate Memorandum by Captain Eardley-Wilmot, in connection with the vagrant in prison. He says: "The knowledge of men of this class which I have gained as Governor of both convict and local prisons, and more recently as an Inspector, has convinced me that no alteration in treatment within the limits that would be allowed in this country could effect their number. Causes for increase must be looked for in the social and economic conditions of the period under discus-

sion. I may add that this is the opinion of every thoughtful and experienced prison official with whom I have discussed the question."

UNIFORMITY IN POLICE ADMINISTRATION.

According to the Committee police administration is likely to be more uniform than the administration of the Guardians. Would that be so?

It is important that there should be uniformity in police action for the repression of begging, by means of which the army of vagrants is kept going; but an examination of the figures reveals faults in this respect, on the part of the police, by the side of which the want of uniformity on the part of the Guardians sinks into comparative insignificance. For instance, the number of prosecutions for begging in the county of Lincoln, with a population of 500,000 in the year 1904, was 2,612; in Essex with a population of 1,083,000, it was only 156; in Cheshire, with a population of 827,000, the number was 1,171; whilst in Stafford, with a population of 1,200,000, it was only 436.

SUBSTITUTION OF POLICE FOR GUARDIANS IN RELIEF OF THE POOR.

Unlike the Unemployed Workmen Act which, whilst economically unsound, may yet have been politically expedient, the proposal to transfer the poor to the police is in every way inexpedient but economically sound. It does not violate that fundamental principle of the English Poor Law system, viz.—that the condition of the pauper ought to be on the whole less eligible than that of the independent labourer. This much then can, I think, be conceded.

But is it expedient—is there any substantial reason for believing the Guardians could not, especially under

the wiser regulations of the central authority, and better financial arrangements which the Committee now recognise as essential, continue the local relief of their casual poor as efficiently as the police are likely to do? Does the Report in any way indicate how the change is to operate in the direction of the suppression of vagrancy? The casual poor are to be divided into two main classes, viz. (1) work-seekers; (2) others. The work-seeker is to be provided with a way-ticket which will entitle the holder to a lodging each night at any casual ward along his line of travel, in special accommodation which is to be reserved for him, supper, breakfast, and on leaving in the morning, after performing two hours' work, the enforcement of which will be optional, with a midday meal which he will take with him. Those without way-tickets will be liable to detention for two nights as under present regulations, and upon application at police stations to a midday meal. In starting the system what will happen? Is it unreasonable to expect that most men on the road against whom nothing can at the time be ascertained will be regarded as genuine work-seekers, and to give them a chance, be supplied with tickets? When the tickets expire, and the holders have managed to avoid a conviction, these will be renewed without a doubt. Imprisonment for short terms is to be discouraged. Where the sentence is for less than fourteen days the Committee suggest that it should be limited to one day, and the conviction recorded, which practically means immediate discharge. I think practical Guardians will be unanimous in agreeing that under such a system vagrancy will be established more firmly than ever, and will offer attractions under which it may be expected to flourish in a way it never has before.

It appears to me that the use to which the police will be applied is very much akin to that to which that vain terror the scarecrow is put in connection with the farmer's crops!

THE LABOUR COLONIES.

But it will be said there are the labour colonies in which the habitual vagrant can be compulsorily detained. This proposal is one of considerable importance, and if the purpose can be easily accomplished, would doubtless be beneficial. But it must be remembered that it is only after a series of convictions that the vagrant is to become liable to this restraint, and even then he has to be tried and sentenced at Quarter Sessions. To identify John Brown, convicted of sleeping-out in London, James Smith, for begging in Norwich, William Jones for refusing to perform his task of work in the casual ward at Newcastle, with George Thomas, convicted for some other offence at Cardiff, will be no easy matter. Yet it will have to be done before the vagrant finds his way into a labour colony, although this difficulty can, in the opinion of the Committee, be surmounted by means of finger-prints. In five years time the number of finger-prints taken will amount to about a quarter of a million. But how many persons will be in the labour colonies? This will of course largely depend upon police activity, and especially the willingness of the magistrates to inflict more severe punishments upon men for begging or sleeping-out, than upon thieves or wife-beaters. Personally, I believe that if it entirely depended upon this, the number in the colonies would be very small, and the effect on general vagrancy absolutely nil. But there is the possibility, indeed, strong probability, that it will not depend upon police activity, and that a certain class of vagrants will voluntarily seek detention in the colonies in such numbers and under such circumstances as will cause the entire system to break down. A further development may then be expected, and an agitation that the whole care of the poor should be again placed in the hands of one authority, and that probably the State.

AN ALTERNATIVE SCHEME.

For dealing with the problem before us two alternatives may be put forward—

- (1.) To adopt the recommendations of the Vagrancy Committee, which, stripped of embellishments, practically mean the continuance of the present system under the police instead of Guardians.
- (2.) To prevent vagrancy to a great extent by more efficiently dealing with the destitute locally.

I have attempted to show that vagrancy is largely caused by the Local Government Board regulations providing for the discharge of the destitute from the wards, and the consequent creation of this particular class.

The Local Government Board and the Guardians have hitherto adopted the attitude of assuming that the persons using the wards are work-seekers, and however short of realisation this may have fallen (in consequence of the inherent weaknesses of human nature), this attitude should not too readily be condemned as incorrect. It has at any rate possessed the merit of affording equal opportunity for all. But a new demand has now arisen, that in some way or other an attempt should be made to differentiate between the individuals forming this class, and that some authority should be required to decide and put on record that, say, Thomas Smith, on the one hand, is an honest man and a genuine labourer, and that, say, John Brown, on the other, is neither.

By what means is this to be accomplished? According to the Vagrancy Committee, and in some indefinite way, the policeman is to be the judge!

The crux of the entire subject is, of course, how to provide facilities for the unemployed workman travel-

ling in search of work who is temporarily destitute, and not provided for by his own trade association. Every facility hitherto provided by public authority for this class has been also available for the confirmed tramp, and generally has been appropriated by such. Is there, then, any method of dealing with them apart either from the police or the casual wards? If facilities must continue to be provided for this class, then I think we should look for their provision to the machinery which can be established under the Unemployed Workmen Act. For good or otherwise this Act has been passed, and there can be no doubt that it is taking root among the institutions of the land. Whatever may happen with regard to its general provisions, it may, I think, be taken for granted that the labour exchanges will be given a thorough trial, and these, to be effective, must, I presume, cover the country.

Here, then, I venture to suggest, is to be found the means of dealing with the genuine workman. Let him register with his distress committee, be subject to the prescribed inquiries, and, if necessary, provided with a way-ticket, which will enable him to obtain at the labour exchanges on his way the means of providing himself with necessary food and lodging, as well as information as to where he may expect to obtain work. Procedure such as this would be in line with the most approved European methods. What may be the result I cannot even venture to speculate upon. The Act was passed for the benefit of the unemployed workmen, and who will dare to deny that the man travelling in search of work should be as much an object of its concern as the man who stays at home?

Let this be conceded, and the way is clear for the next step, which is the abolition of the distinction between the ordinary and casual pauper. When once the genuine workman is provided for, there can be no possible advantage in recognising an intermediate class, depen-

dent on public funds but free to wander up and down the country as they please. The present casual wards would provide much-needed accommodation for dealing with the able-bodied, and the provisions of the Poor Law Act, 1899, which provide for a certain class of persons being required to give seven days' notice of their intention to discharge themselves, should be extended to include this class. All, I am sure, will agree with the Committee in their recommendation that women and children should go to the Workhouse.

Such a scheme if adopted would, I feel sure, put a greater check on vagrancy than the scheme of the Vagrancy Committee, and could be more easily put into operation, as it involves less disturbance of existing arrangements than the suggested cumbersome transfer to the police.

The question naturally arises as to what is to be done with the casual poor when they are more or less confined to the Workhouses. This properly belongs and is quite sufficient to form the subject of a separate paper, but it cannot entirely be left out of account. In the first place the wards at present used for vagrants which would be thrown into the Workhouse will accommodate nearly 21,000 persons. This accommodation is suitable for men, and its use for this class should certainly be tried before committing the country to large expenditure on special institutions or large central labour colonies. The younger and more promising men could be picked out and sent by Boards of Guardians to farm colonies, which voluntary or joint effort would, I have no doubt, be ready to establish. In the Workhouse the inmates should certainly be kept well employed, and the Local Government Board should insist upon, and enforce when necessary, efficiency in this department.

The abolition of the distinction between the vagrant and the ordinary pauper has before been advo-

cated. In 1888 the Lords' Committee on Poor Law Relief had the subject before them when Mr J. S. Davey, a member of the recent Committee, Mr R. Hedley, then Inspector for London, and Mr W. Vallance, the then experienced Clerk to the White-chapel Guardians, all advocated such a step being taken. The Lords' Committee did not recommend the adoption of such a course, but gave no particular reason except that these persons could not be dealt with otherwise than as a separate class. The recent Vagrancy Committee considered the subject, but could not recommend it. With both Committees the workman travelling in search of work must have been the real difficulty to contend with. In 1888 there was no machinery other than the Poor Law in view, but it is to be regretted that in 1906 the Vagrancy Committee entirely overlooked that this could be established under the Unemployed Workmen Act.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS.

The Committee in their Report recognise that their proposals would entail increased cost, and that an extension of the area of chargeability is necessary. There is, of course, much to be said in favour of equalising Poor Law expenditure, whether on resident or non-resident poor, if it can be done without that extinction of local interest, and the consequent indifference to increasing expenditure which invariably accompany an extension of the area of chargeability.

One of the gravest objections to the proposal to make the vagrant a national or a county charge, whilst the resident poor remain a local charge, is that it must inevitably lead to increased vagrancy, for it would be almost impossible to resist starting a man upon the road if it appeared that the local funds could thereby be protected.

It appears to me that the better proposal would be to retain the present manageable areas, but that the

present system of grants in aid of Poor Law expenditure should be entirely revised, and take the form of block grants distributed according to the needs of the different areas. These grants should be conditional upon certificates being issued by the Local Government Board, that the law had been given effect to, the Orders of the Board observed, and the Union efficiently and economically administered. With such a weapon in their hands it could no longer be said that the Local Government Board would have no means at their disposal of securing compliance with their regulations.

CONCLUSION.

Time and space are restricted, and the details involved in the proposals of the Vagrancy Committee have scarcely been touched upon, but I submit that a case has been made out for a reconsideration of the question. A Royal Commission, with a far wider reference, is investigating the administration of the Poor Laws, and Guardians might reasonably ask that the subject of vagrancy and the Report of the Committee should be reviewed by this Commission.

The tendency of the present day to divide the work of public relief among a number of different authorities all operating in one area will, I am convinced, be productive of much evil. It can produce nothing but irresponsibility, laxity of administration, and general indifference, under which the number dependent upon the public funds and the cost of administration will increase enormously.

The past few years has unquestionably been a period of more than ordinary distress, but how small will that distress appear when we compare it with the magnificent progress England has made in the seventy years covered by the present Poor Law system. Now and then there has been a check, here and there a short retrogression, but as to the general progress there can surely be no doubt. England is still full of

vitality, and if only the foundations upon which her hitherto successful career has been based remain undisturbed, her continuous progress is assured.

Mr H. G. WILLINK (Bradfield) then read the following paper :—

THE VAGRANT POOR, WITH ESPECIAL
REGARD TO THE REPORT OF THE
DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON
VAGRANCY.

By H. G. WILLINK,
Poor Law Guardian, Bradfield Union.

THE vagabond ; the sturdy vagabond, "mighty in body" ; the ruffler ; the "vagrant man" ; the loiterer or loafer ; the mendicant ; the cadger ; the beggar ; the valiant beggar ; the "idell and suspecte persone" ; the idle and disorderly person ; the rogue and vagabond ; the incorrigible (or dangerous) rogue ; the undesirable ; the unemployable ; the "work-shy" ; the able-bodied in-and-out ; the casual ; the tramp ; the refractory tramp ; the vagrant ; the habitual vagrant ; the "bottom dog"—not to mention "fencers, bearwards, play-actors not authorised by law, minstrels, jugglers, tinkers, fortune-tellers, pedlars, petty-chapmen," and others coming within the scope of divers well-meant statutes—what a picture, or succession of pictures, these words call up ! What a terrible, mournful series of unsuccessful attempts to eliminate a certain persistent tendency, or weakness of human nature ! How difficult to realise that each and every individual of this great army, recruited from all nations in all periods of history, was once an innocent child ! The thought suggests despair.

Severity, with its brandings and mutilations, its chains and whippings, has failed ; and the more recent variegated system (or system of non-systems under 600

independent authorities) has equally failed, of regarding the vagrant as a kind of hybrid, half-pauper, half-criminal—or rather half *non*-pauper, half *non*-criminal, for (in the words of the Report of the Departmental Committee) :

It has been well said that the police authorities treat the vagrant as a criminal but do not punish him, while the Poor Law authorities treat him as a pauper, but do not relieve him (sec. 431).

This excellent Report, the principal subject of the present paper, is concerned with the actual vagrant (man, woman, or child) and his proper treatment, to the exclusion of certain wider and deeper considerations which are equally essential in relation to any attempts entirely to abolish him.*

Vagrancy, however, is only a single branch of the large and complicated social question, and we must not be too confident that any scheme will be really successful which is not sooner or later accompanied by improvements in the moral and material condition of the poor as a whole. One might as well hope to get rid of bindweed by cutting off the shoots as to extinguish vagrancy by anything you can do to men when once they have become habitual "vagrants." For one success there will be many failures.

With this reservation, let us turn to the consideration of the Report, which contains, even without the appendices, a vast amount of information in a condensed and yet readable form. It should be carefully studied by all who wish to understand the question.

The Committee propose in the first place that all casual wards shall be placed under the police, and be managed on a uniform system as to diet, tasks, detention, &c., under regulations by the Home Office; the enforcement of such regulations being secured through the Home Secretary's certificate of efficiency, the issue

* The reference was (briefly) to inquire and report with respect to England and Wales as to the law as to vagrants, and its administration, and any desirable amendments therein.

of which is the necessary condition of the grant from the local taxation account towards the cost of every county or borough police force. No exception is made in the case of the metropolitan area; the special difficulties in respect of this matter are realised and examined, but the conclusion is definitely arrived at, and the counties and parts of counties policed by the metropolitan police will (if the Report takes effect in law) have their casual wards committed to the control of that very efficient body, whose position would be assimilated to that of the standing joint or watch committees elsewhere, so as to dissociate the Secretary of State from his present direct control, and leave him with power of general control over London and country alike. (See secs. 137-145.) The reason given for this important recommendation is, that no system would be really uniform which did not include London, with its hordes of habitual indigenous vagrants or loafers, and the numbers of others who flock in from the country at particular times. As regards the relations between the various authorities in consequence of the transfer of the casual wards, the proposal is that where such wards form part of a Workhouse the Guardians should retain ownership, but be required to let them, and in other cases should either let or sell them, to the police authority on terms settled, if necessary, by the Local Government Board. Some country wards might well be closed, and perhaps some new ones built.

Next, as to what is to be done with the casual or vagrant class itself. Women and children are not, under any circumstances, to be received into the casual ward, but into the Workhouses on an order of the relieving officer, or, in urgent cases, by the master; the discharge being subject to the ordinary notice. Special points about families of *bonâ fide* wayfarers on the one hand, and of "habitual vagrants" on the other, will be mentioned presently.

As regards male members of the class who are now to be found in our casual wards, the Committee advise clear lines of differentiation. The *bonâ fide* wayfarer "who can satisfy the police either that he has worked at some employment (other than a casual job) within, say, three months, and that he has reasonable ground for expecting to get work at a certain place, and is likely to keep to it, or that he has some other good ground for desiring to go to some particular place," would obtain from the police a way-ticket, giving his personal description, his trade, his reason for wanting to travel, and his proposed destination, with his signature (if any), and possibly his finger-print. This ticket, or book, would last, say, one month, and its production would entitle to a night's lodging, supper, and breakfast, with a right, subject to a small task, to go on next day, or to rest for a second night at his choice, and to take with him a ration of bread and cheese enough for the day (secs. 178-181).

The ordinary casual, on discharge, would receive no ration, but would obtain food at any police station on presentation of a day-ticket from his last ward. This plan "confers an advantage on the man *bonâ fide* in search of work, and tends to bring the other class into contact with the police in the middle of the day, and to keep them to the main roads." Vagrants not using casual wards would get no food in this way. And it may here be noted that the Committee express disapproval of shelters and free food distributions, which they consider should be placed under control of the Local Authorities, apparently in consultation with the police, who would also have increased control of common lodging-houses (secs. 360, 366-7). They also point out once more the evils of indiscriminate almsgiving (sec. 437).*

Coming to the proposals of the Committee as to

* See leaflet and poster in use in the Bradfield Union. Appendix, *post*.

the confirmed tramp, we approach the *crux*. After reviewing the present system, with its costly series of useless short sentences, leading up to longer and less justifiable periods of imprisonment, they declare that prison is not the place for punishing vagrant offenders (sec. 216). They propose that a new class, a class of "habitual vagrants," should be defined by statute, including "any person who has been three or more times convicted within, say, twelve months, of certain offences now coming under the Vagrancy Act, viz., sleeping out, begging, refusing to perform task of work in casual wards, or refusing or neglecting to maintain himself so that he becomes chargeable to the poor rate," a definition which can be utilised for the troublesome class of "ins-and-outs" (sec. 221). So long, however, as a man can steer clear of committing these offences he can apparently continue to live the casual life.

Upon first and second convictions * it is urged that, unless at least a fourteen days' sentence is given, the offender should be discharged after being finger-printed (necessitating at first a good many remands) and the conviction recorded (secs. 196, 224).

Upon the third conviction he should be committed to Quarter Sessions or Assizes, and there dealt with as an "incorrigible rogue," unless accommodation is available in a *labour colony*, to which he should, if possible, be sent for a term not less than six months, nor more than three years (secs. 222, 285).

So far then, to sum up, we have the scheme in

* Under the Vagrancy Act, 1824, a first offender is styled an "idle and disorderly person," and is liable to one month's imprisonment. A second conviction changes his title to "rogue and vagabond," and warrants three months, while on the third conviction he blossoms into an "incorrigible rogue," and may be committed to prison with hard labour until the next Quarter Sessions, when he may be further imprisoned, with hard labour, for not more than a year, and be whipped. But magistrates seldom proceed to such extremities; which is one of the difficulties of the case.

outline, thus :—Uniformity all over the country ; police control, subject to the Home Office, of all casual wards ; women and children treated separately from men, and in Workhouses, not casual wards ; in the case of “habituals,” children to be sent to industrial schools, and special labour colonies to be reserved for women ; male tramps divided into (a) *bonâ fide* wayfarers, with way-tickets ; (b) [i] ordinary casuals, with day-tickets, [ii] other wandering shelter-birds ; and (c) “Habitual vagrants,” being previously members of class (b) but having sustained a third conviction under the Vagrancy Act within one year. Class (b) to be subject to no punishment unless guilty of offences under that Act, and even then, as a rule, convictions to entail little more than a “brief detention,” and a record, with finger-tip identification. Class (c) to be dealt with in the manner now to be described.

After reviewing carefully the various forms of labour colony which have already been established abroad, *i.e.*, those of Holland, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland, and also those which in various forms and at various times have been tried at home, from the reign of Henry VIII. down to the present “colonies” at Hadleigh (Salvation Army), Lingfield (Christian Social Service Union), and Laindon (Poplar Guardians),* the Committee conclude that, although there is little prospect of effecting reformation,

The need of some power of keeping habitual vagrants in detention for long periods is clearly proved ; and in view of the impossibility of making a prison serve the purpose, we feel we have no alternative but to recommend that compulsory labour colonies should be established in this country. Even if they are not successful in achieving greater reformatory effects than the existing labour colonies abroad, we think that at least they may clear the streets of the habitual vagrant and loafer, may make him lead a more useful life during his detention, and may offer a real deterrent to those starting a life of vagrancy (sec. 276).

* Those at Hollesley Bay and Newdigate are not considered to be of importance for the present purpose.

They do not advise that any such colonies should at first be provided by the State, except one quasi-penal colony for difficult cases (sec. 305). The number, size, situation, type, which would be required are all still unsettled, and efficient staffing would be almost impossible if many colonies were started at once. In short, they advise that, as in the case of reformatory and industrial schools and inebriate reformatories,* the experiments should be tried by private or local initiative, which again would probably admit of more effective personal supervision and care, springing from religious or charitable motives, than in State institutions (secs. 277-282). They recommend, therefore, that each labour colony should be certified by the Secretary of State, be managed under regulations issued by him, and be subject to inspection by his officers. He could certify a colony established (a) by private philanthropy; (b) by a religious or charitable society; or (c) by a local authority. They think that counties and county boroughs should make such arrangements that their habitual vagrants could be sent to colonies of some sort, either by establishing the same themselves, alone or jointly with others, or contributing towards maintenance. There is no suggestion that Boards of Guardians or District Councils should have anything to do with the business.

As regards cost, since the State saves prison charges, and the locality saves casual ward expenses and also mendicant extortions, it is recognised that both the Exchequer and the local rates should contribute. A fair sum, not being so much as the gross cost, per head per week should be fixed as such total contribution, the State paying one-half of this in any case, and the Local Authority the other half, unless they themselves were managing the colony. Private colonies' accounts would be subject to audit; and this whole system of public contribution would ensure effectual public control. It

* Until 1877 local prisons were in the hands of local bodies.

may be found desirable to empower the Treasury to aid in establishment expenses as well as in those of maintenance.

Turning to the actual management of the colonies, we find that the Committee recommend that earlier discharges should be obtainable by good conduct and by earning a certain sum of money as wages in the colony. They look to such considerations for the best means of enforcing discipline, industry, and general good behaviour—a very important matter, as anyone who has seen large collections of men of this class will realise. They do not much favour absolute punishments, even confinement to a cell would (they think) probably soon lose its effect—though it appears to be effective in Switzerland. The power of earning something, with a right to spend part of it in the canteen on extra food, tobacco, &c. ; perhaps, too, a prospect of privileges by a system of graded classes—these inducements, it is hoped, would supply the necessary stimulus, while the withdrawal of them would furnish an effectual means of punishment (secs. 290, 294). For it is not proposed that the ordinary standard of diet or general comfort should be such as to be attractive. The Report is emphatic on this point* (sec. 289) and on the need for strict uniformity. Nor indeed do the Committee recommend that (as is sometimes proposed) persons should be allowed voluntarily to get themselves sent to the colonies on their own application to a magistrate. Further, they urge that both in the establishment and maintenance of these colonies any tendency to extravagance should be avoided. The buildings, &c., should be simple and inexpensive ; nor is there any need for a particularly strong staff as custodians. They should be on a far

* In the words of the Report : "The dietary in some rate-aided institutions is often much superior to that which can be obtained by the independent labourer. An institution intended for habitual vagrants should not be open to this objection."

cheaper scale in both respects than prisons. It is not a case of such very rigorous detention.

If a colonist escapes and is able to support himself without coming within the reach of the law, his escape from the colony is no matter for regret; if he breaks the law, and comes again before a magistrate, a proper system of identification will ensure his being sent back to the colony.

No doubt, if the system is adopted, and as it becomes better known and better worked, this will be true in England, as it is in Belgium. But the "incorrigible rogue" may take a little time to find out that a labour colony, with practically open doors, for three years, is as much to be dreaded as a year's imprisonment with hard labour, and a possible whipping. If the apprehension of the latter sentence has not stopped his vagrancy, will the former stop it?

Lastly, as to the kind of work which is to be expected of colonists, and the worth of it. The Committee are under no delusions on the latter point. They are clear that such colonies cannot be paying concerns. On the other hand, they consider that the lengthened residence, and the compulsory detention, do give advantages over any of the labour colonies at present existing in this country, all of which are "voluntary," and in all of which the colonists' labour is of little value. They go so far as to say, "that in a well-managed colony a not inconsiderable percentage of the inmates might after a short period of detention be made to earn a substantial part of the cost of their maintenance" (sec. 298). And, unlike some advocates of such institutions, past and present, they boldly face the inevitable and declare that workshops and various indoor industries must be established, as well as farm-work, if employment has to be found for a large number of all sorts and conditions of men all the year round.

The resulting difficulty as to competition with independent labour does not frighten them, and they are inclined to hold that if a colony is not to compete with

outside labour, it is only fair that it should itself be free from outside competition—in other words, provide for itself, and for kindred institutions. They go further, and intimate that occupations which would not compete with home industries would be legitimate. When they proceed to suggest that “possibly certain goods required by Government, such as boots for the army, might be made in the labour colonies” (sec. 302) it is not so easy to feel that they are on safe lines, though they are careful to stipulate that the independent producer should not be undersold. This is ticklish ground; and although the temptation is sure to arise, it may be regretted that the tempter will be able to refer to this weighty Report for justification. Should we get *very* good boots? and why stop at boots? Does this boot conceal a cloven hoof?

Space and time do not permit further detail as to financial considerations, *e.g.*, as to comparative saving. But, after all, these are largely a matter of estimate; and although it is reassuring to note the repeated stress laid by the Committee on economy, and the surprisingly low cost of diet (about 1s. 4½d. per head weekly, sec. 313), and again the wise warnings against expensive buildings,* still, one cannot help a certain amount of apprehension lest the usual British tendency, where public money is concerned, may once more successfully assert itself, and lest Local Authorities at least, whatever private or charitable institutions may do, may contrive, in spite of central guidance, to insist on doing the thing expensively.

Nevertheless, the great question is, will these colonies, be they cheap or be they dear, do what is expected of them? That they will reform individual

* The Committee think that temporary buildings will be really better than permanent ones, at any rate in the early days—a colony may, for instance, have to be moved—and colonists ought to do as much of the work themselves as possible. In any case they suggest that colony buildings should be exempt from the operation of local building bye-laws.

vagrants, in any numbers, or with any permanency, the Committee do not expect, nor will many people be more sanguine. But there is good ground for hoping that there will be some appreciable results, of the right kind, from the proposed system (of which labour colonies are only a part). The various classes of casual will be differentiated; the women and children will get a better chance, the genuine wayfarer will have little to complain of; the others, if and when they become "habituals," will sooner or later be rounded up and go through a steady course of work. During this experience they will be segregated, kept from multiplication (and subtraction), and will improve in health and strength. If they improve in other ways, so much the better; if they do not, and loathe the whole concern, so much the more chance of its acting as a deterrent. In any case, the almsgiving public will have even less excuse than now for not remembering that beggars need not beg; and the large section of the public from whom alms are extorted will be relieved from the visits of the extortioners. Lastly, the spread of such diseases as accompany tramps will presumably be diminished.

So much commendation calls for an *advocatus diaboli*. And there are, undoubtedly, points to be made on the other side. Can Quarter Sessions be trusted to send these "incorrigible rogues" to the colonies? There is always a reluctance to inflict severe penalties, such as long detention, for mere poverty without crime; and justices may not be anxious to saddle their rates with the cost of contributing to the maintenance of individuals, who, *ex hypothesi*, scarcely belong to their district. In these days, when so large a proportion of the population is entangled in institution-life, whether as inmates or officials, any proposal to establish or recognise yet another set of institutions demands strong justification. For do not let us shut our eyes. However small the beginning, when once

the State begins to contribute and to exercise the properly resulting supervision the pressure towards State ownership and management becomes stronger as time goes on. Who would have thought fifty years ago that voluntary schools had entered the maelström! And in the present case, the admitted need for uniformity and universality must intensify the pressure. If the experiment is really tried, even under the conditions and safeguards so carefully laid down, there can be little doubt that in the long run we shall have a system of State labour colonies. If they answer, well and good: but if they do not, it will be very difficult to discontinue them.

Again, we must not be too sanguine as to their economical working. England is very unlike Belgium or the Netherlands. Our standard of living is very different. What scandals are conceivable about the enforcement of a dietary at 1s. 4½d. per head per week? And our habitual vagrants may need more supervision, even on so low a diet, than foreigners. Even wretched, weakly, debased creatures, like many of the 5,000 "able-bodied" inmates of Merxplas, cannot be kept in decent control without some stringent means. Moreover the Committee, who are well aware that labour colonies are no new thing (sec. 227), know, too, how schemes which have begun in a small way have grown to larger and less manageable proportions both in size and functions. Sir John McNeill's Report in 1853 on the Free and Pauper Colonies in Holland will have warned them of the unexpected nature of some of the developments. The experience of Switzerland, where these colonies seem to have had the greatest amount of success, at any rate as regards reformatory results and abolition of visible vagrancy, points to the superiority of small over large institutions. Yet, no doubt, up to a limit, an increase of size must mean proportional economy, and the inclination will naturally tend that way—none the less so because there

will probably be some difficulty in finding any great number of sites. It is not everyone who will wish to have a labour colony as a neighbour.

Then there is the recurring difficulty of what is a man to do when he goes out? He has the colony stamp on him. He will not easily find employment in the open market even if he is fit for it. The Belgian story is that the few good workmen soon come back, for the same reason that brought them in, drink! In any case, which of us Guardians, all presumably rather unusually prone to help lame dogs over stiles, would be very anxious to engage an ex-habitual vagrant? The Swiss apparently provide for their colonists, on discharge, either (*a*) by employment as paid labourers in the colony, (*b*) through a Discharged Prisoners' Aid Society, or (*c*) by admission to a voluntary farm (sec. 253). At present there is no proposal to establish the latter in this country; the prisoners' aid societies have plenty to do already; and the number of paid colony-labourers will not admit of many vacancies. Of course, the best thing will be that the man should "find work" for himself. But, failing that, the prospect is not very bright. Perhaps something may be done to link up the colonies with emigration agencies, for a new start in new surroundings may succeed where other means fail. There is, indeed, a great deal to be said for the Salvation Army system, of a series of co-ordinated grades, each one giving the inmate, or patient, something a little higher to hope for, and culminating with a new life. For, in conclusion, that, by whatever names it is called, and on whatever lines it is worked, must be, I think, the only possible way out of the morass for individuals. Why and how they get into it, and why there is a morass at all, and how it ought to be drained, are matters with which we to-day and the Committee are not concerned, vital though these matters are. There may be, there probably is, but

little prospect of saving those who are once plunged into the morass. It is surrounded by a very slippery bank, and over its surface floats continually a stifling, enervating mist. Short of the miracle which genuine religious influence, the power of God, alone can work, what can be done? Not much perhaps. But the Committee's recommendations point, or will most likely lead, to the eventual establishment of a series of graded institutions, offering successive opportunities of rising, and at the same time affording progressive means of becoming fit to rise. It is not the least merit of this Report that so far as its scope permits, it also provides in some degree for fencing off the dangerous area, with a view to making entry into it less easy for those with any will to keep clear. But unless the labour colonies themselves are something more than official open-air prisons, uninspired and unaided by the personal efforts of men, and perhaps women, combining in rare degree qualities of enthusiasm and patience in reformatory work; and unless they are supplemented by the provision of ascending stages of similar institutions, managed in a like spirit, we must not be disappointed if the results are rather negative than visibly positive.

Nevertheless, even negative results in such a matter as this would be of considerable value; and as it is clear that no system which has hitherto been tried in this country has had any appreciable results at all, local success in reducing vagrancy being little more than a diversion of the stream of vagrants, and general variation in vagrancy statistics being apparently connected with commercial and national circumstances, it is difficult to deny that good reason has been shown for a new departure. After all, the greater the success the less the vagrancy. And it must not be forgotten that the proposals have been drawn up by a body of experts, who have been careful to observe to the fullest extent possible the fundamental principle of the old

Poor Law, viz., that the situation of the man who accepts public support shall not be made really or apparently so eligible as that of the independent labourer.

APPENDIX.

BRADFIELD BOARD OF GUARDIANS.

TRAMPS AND BEGGARS.

The Board call attention to the following facts, viz. :—

1. There are few, if any, parts of this Union where a destitute person honestly seeking work cannot easily reach a Workhouse or Casual Ward by nightfall.

2. These Workhouses and Casual Wards are maintained at the cost of the ratepayers, for the express purpose of affording food and shelter to destitute persons.

3. The number of vagrants in the county appears to be increasing, to the growing cost and inconvenience of people in general.

4. The Departmental Committee on Vagrancy declare that "indiscriminate almsgiving is the main support of vagrancy."

The Board therefore urge the public not to make a practice of giving food or money to tramps or beggars, but to refer them to the police, or to the Workhouse nearest to the route by which they say they want to go.

R. E. RAWSTORNE,
Clerk to the Guardians.

August, 1906.

A vagrant can be admitted, if destitute, to the Casual Ward without an order from a Relieving Officer.

The practice at the Bradfield Workhouse (Casual Ward) is :—

Two nights' detention.—Separate Cells.—Bath.—Food ; Bread, or Bread and Cheese (at Master's discretion), and Water (Children, Milk).

Work :—(One day) Stone Pounding for Men, Oakum Picking for Women.

Apparently respectable *bond fide* wayfarers in search of work *may* be released earlier, and food given them for the day. Sick or exhausted persons receive proper treatment.

There are also Workhouses, with Casual Wards, at Abingdon, Basingstoke, Hartley-Wintney, Henley, Reading, Wallingford, Wantage, and Wokingham.

DISCUSSION.

Sir W. CHANCE, Bart., the selected speaker, in opening the discussion said—While I fully recognise the ability of Mr Mott's paper, I do not think that this Conference will agree with his plan for the better treatment of vagrants.

He divides vagrants into two classes—(a) the *bonâ-fide* wayfarers, and (b) the confirmed vagrant. He would bring the former within the machinery of the Unemployed Workmen's Act, and relieve the latter in the Workhouse, abolishing the distinction made between the casual and settled poor.

One obvious difficulty in the way of carrying out the first suggestion is the scarcity of Distress Committees. Such Committees are really only suited for large towns, and are quite out of place in the country. Would it be worth while establishing a chain of travellers' homes all over the country for the reception only of genuine cases (for remember how small the number of *bonâ-fide* wayfarers is), and is not the proper function of Distress Committees to deal with local distress? To extend their functions to finding work for the unemployed of other districts, and to pay for their housing, would surely be merely an encouragement to vagrancy.

Of course there would be no objection, under the plan of the Departmental Committee, to a Distress Committee (where such existed) giving to an unemployed man of their district the necessary certificate to enable him to procure a way-ticket.

Then as to abolishing the distinction between the casual and settled poor, I must admit that I have always had a leaning that way. But I very much doubt whether Boards of Guardians would be willing to open the doors of their Workhouses to all ordinary tramps. The House of Lords Committee of 1888 were dead against the proposal, although all the evidence they took was in favour of it, and it has never received any extended support. If Mr Mott wishes to obtain the opinion of Boards of Guardians, he has only to persuade his own Board to circularise other Boards on the subject. As a matter of fact the Departmental Committee do recommend that female and child vagrants should be relieved in this way, but their numbers are very small in comparison to the total number of vagrants, and easily manageable. Then in order to secure more uniformity under the existing system, Mr Mott recommends a system of block grants. This point was carefully considered by the Committee, and rejected for the reasons set out in paragraph 123 of their Report. To carry out such a suggestion would be most difficult and certain to cause great friction. It seems to me, therefore, that he has not been successful in pointing out a better way, nor one which would receive much support from Boards of Guardians. He does not appear to defend the present system, and so far he is at one with the Departmental Committee.

I now come to his criticisms of detail. In paragraph 5 of his

paper he draws attention to causes for increase of vagrancy. My reply to this is that it is not enough to go back to 1899 only. If we go back to 1891 we find that the numbers of paupers relieved on the 1st January and 1st July of that year were 4,960 and 5,089 respectively; 1st of January vagrancy has therefore almost doubled since 1891, while 1st July vagrancy has increased nearly 75 per cent. I think the increase of vagrancy is far more due to a defective system of treatment than to any other cause.

In paragraph 7 he ascribes the conclusion to which the Committee came as the result of its constitution. I am certain that no member of the Committee had any bias—whether conscious or unconscious—in favour of a bureaucratic system, and I do not think the Home Office are the least anxious to undertake the charge of the vagrant, although it will have to undertake the duty if Parliament so wills, and I am sure that the Standing Joint and Watch Committees will effectively perform it. Local management (see paragraph 8) will still exist, only the areas of the local authorities will be greatly extended, and the number of casual wards reduced.

In paragraphs 11 and 12 Mr Mott shows that the effect of increased detention in Fulham has not been to reduce vagrants, but that on the contrary their numbers have greatly increased. But the evidence before the Committee showed that the London vagrant is like the heathen Chinese quite peculiar, and that he does not care for detention (the explanation of this is set out fully in paragraph 110 of the Report). In the country generally the effect of increased detention has almost always been to decrease the numbers of vagrants in those wards where it is practised.

As to what Mr Mott says in paragraph 13, no sane person can hope to suppress vagrancy; but it can be better regulated, and the criminal portion of the vagrant class better dealt with under the proposals of the Departmental Committee. In paragraph 16 Mr Mott draws attention to the want of uniformity in different parts of the country in the repression of begging. But these differences are easily explained. The Home Office has never issued any definite instructions in the matter. Benches of magistrates do not treat vagrant offenders on the same lines, and the police will not prosecute unless they know they will get convictions. A great deal depends on the action of Chief Constables, and in Lincolnshire the Chief Constable has been particularly active. Then some counties, such as Essex, are off the main line of tramps. But under the Committee's scheme a definite line of action is laid down, and if the scheme be adopted the police and the Magistrates will have to carry it out.

As to the way-ticket system suggested in the Report, Mr Mott is not accurate in saying that the *bona-fide* wayfarer will have an option as to doing a task of work or not. He must do at least two hours' work, and his only option is whether he does it on the evening of his arrival at the casual ward or upon the morning of his departure. Then, before he receives a way-ticket from the police he has to satisfy

them that he has been in recent employment before they will give it to him. My own opinion is that very few people will apply for those way-tickets. As to the Committee's recommendation that no sentence of imprisonment for less than fourteen days should be given, their reasons for it are fully set out in the Report. These short sentences are absolutely useless for persons of the vagrant class, and they are no deterrent. If the offence is a serious one, although possibly a first one, nothing under twenty-eight days does much good; if it is a trivial one, and a first one, the fact that a conviction is recorded is ample punishment and equally effective as a sentence of three, seven, or ten days. And please remember that three vagrancy offences constitute incorrigible vagrancy, with the certainty of being sent to a penal colony. Mr Mott ridicules the "identification" system for vagrants; but I do not think he can have seen how easily it is worked at Scotland Yard. Each offender has his own record sheet, and it is as easy to deal with 250,000 such sheets as with 60,000, for all the sheets are classified in separate small groups. It only takes a few minutes to discover whether the finger-prints of an offender are already recorded in the office. It does not matter by what name an offender calls himself; if John Brown has the same marks as James Smith and William Jones, they are the same person; for it is a remarkable fact that no one set of finger-marks (for the imprints of each hand are taken) corresponds in every particular with another set. Therefore the mere fear of being detected for an old offence will deter vagrants from committing offences, especially with the labour colony in the background. Mr Mott gives two reasons why labour colonies will be ineffective; first, that the Courts will hesitate to make use of them, and secondly, that they will be chiefly used by voluntary entrants. There seems little reason to anticipate the former difficulty. At present the Courts do not inflict long sentences on vagrants because there is a difficulty in obtaining information of previous convictions, and because they feel that the present system of imprisonment is wholly unsatisfactory for dealing with these cases. This feeling and this difficulty will no longer exist under the Committee's scheme. As to the second point, labour colonies are not intended for voluntary entrants, but only for vagrants sent to them as "incorrigible rogues." It is, of course, possible that a person may commit a series of offences, and so qualify for being sent, but it is hardly likely that a period of detention in a labour colony on a minimum diet and with enforced labour would be sufficiently attractive to cause this to happen to any extent.

In conclusion, I have not yet seen any objection made against the Committee's scheme which cannot be satisfactorily answered. The whole question really hinges on the point whether it is or is not desirable to transfer the entire control of the male vagrant from the Board of Guardians to the police. If it is considered desirable, then all objections of detail can be surmounted.

Mr A. C. MITCHELL (Chairman of the County Vagrancy Committee, Wiltshire) said that as long ago as 1880 they in Wiltshire faced what they thought the very large increase in the number of vagrants. The matter was brought before Quarter Sessions, which appointed a Committee to inquire into the question, and the view Quarter Sessions took was that under the existing state of the laws regarding the treatment of vagrants it was extremely difficult to convict. They pointed out that a man was turned out of the Union early in the morning with nothing to exist on for the rest of the day, and the public found it exceedingly difficult to refuse giving to beggars, because they knew that a man had come out of the vagrant ward only with his morning meal, and would get nothing until he got an evening meal at next ward. That shortly seemed to him to be the reason for a great part of the conclusions to which that most able and laborious Committee which had just been sitting on this vagrancy question, had arrived. He would like to add his tribute to the great amount of labour which the Committee devoted to their work, and to thank them for the very able report which was the outcome of those labours. (Hear, hear.) He could speak as one who was under examination for some time by them, and of the great courtesy and patience displayed by them, and at the great pains they took to extract information. He thought that the real cause of vagrancy was the public giving carelessly—that seemed to him to be the chief reason of the existence of the vagrant. (Hear, hear.) If the public were not to give carelessly to any person who asked alms, he thought the vagrant would be bound to disappear, as he would not be able to get a living. There was another class of person in the country from whom the vagrant got a living, and that was from unprotected women living in isolated places, who when the husband was away from home and there were no men about, felt afraid to refuse help to the sturdy beggar who came to the door and demanded it. There would always be persons travelling the country, some—a very small proportion, he admitted—decent men, who had no means to pay for a railway ticket, and the public ought to be assured that for such men proper accommodation and food was provided by the rates. He thought the system which the Report advocated of having a way-ticket by which the man got rather more favoured terms at the casual ward was justified. In the Union of which he was a Guardian some years ago they adopted a system by which a man who had a way ticket was provided with a whistle, and as soon as he finished his task and blew his whistle he was let out. There was a great advantage in that because the men went out separately instead of all going down the road together. From a good many years' experience he confirmed most strongly that the great difficulty they had had in dealing with the question of vagrancy had been the diversity of authority. Each Board of Guardians treated the vagrant from its own individual standpoint, and not from one large point of view. They really wanted to get rid of the men from their own Unions, not caring much where

they went to. That, he thought, was a sufficient reason why the matter should be put under one authority, and he failed to see any other authority which could deal with it so well as the police. The police covered the whole of the country, and were under one authority, viz., the Home Office. He was a great advocate that the casual poor, who were not the local poor, should be removed from the jurisdiction of the Boards of Guardians, and from the Local Government Board, and should be placed under the police and the Home Office. The members of country Boards of Guardians whom he had spoken to on the subject had not the slightest objection to the care of the vagrant being taken away from them—in fact, they would be glad if it were so. The diversity of treatment, both as regarded work and food, was very great in one county, and if that was so it must be very much more the case when one took the whole of England. The knowledge that one system was common to the whole country would, he believed, stop the careless giving of money far more than would be the case if isolated localities took certain measures. When it was universally known that the man was provided for, surely the public would not go on giving in the careless manner they now did. The Report of the Departmental Committee was divided into three parts:—First, there was the change of authority, and the endeavour to get uniformity; secondly, there was the system of tickets by which the man who satisfied the police that he was going to a given destination with a legitimate object would obtain better terms; and the third was as to the punishment of the vagrant. From his experience as a magistrate and a Guardian it seemed that the usual punishments were of no good whatever—in fact, he had known of many instances where a man had committed an offence against the Vagrancy Act so that he might be sent to prison rather than be in the casual ward—because the treatment in prison was better than the treatment in the casual ward. With regard to the labour colonies for the confirmed vagrant, of course they were bound to be an experiment, as we had never had anything of the sort before. Personally he was very hopeful of the labour colonies. He should imagine they would be tried on a small scale at first, and he hoped there might be good results from the experiment. He did not see any other course to try to deal with the confirmed vagrant except to get him into some institution of the kind. (Hear, hear.)

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER (Hon. Sec. of the West Midland Poor Law Conference) said he only wished to touch upon one point of the very complex question they were considering, and that was as to the provision of a mid-day meal, and the question of the food generally. In Gloucester some years ago they instituted the provision of a mid-day meal by a fund subscribed for by the magistrates and Boards of Guardians, and as they well advertised the fact, it at first had the effect of reducing the careless givings which had been spoken of. After a time, however, it wore off, and the people got careless again. In the scheme before them there was a great improvement, viz., tha

the meal was intended to be a very substantial one of bread and cheese, which would take away any possible excuse for the vagrant asking for help; and he certainly hoped that such a meal would be provided for out of the rates. If the ratepayers knew that their money was providing a mid-day meal, no one would feel any necessity to give to beggars. (Hear, hear.)

Mr W. Cox (Guildford) remarked that he considered the paper of Mr Mott was a most valuable one, and it would be useless for him to attempt to criticise it in detail in the five minutes allotted to him. He would therefore confine himself to the question of the Unemployed Workmen's Act. What he hoped to see pressed upon the authorities of towns, more particularly on Boards of Guardians, was the adoption of the Act. The establishment of labour bureaux was one of the grandest things that had ever been started in this country. If labour bureaux were established in every town it would save men from tramping the country, because they would be able to register their names, and so obtain employment. As to farm colonies he had seen a good deal of that kind of thing abroad, and it would be a grand thing if they could be adopted in this country, as it would put a stop to travelling about by vagrants.

Rev. J. SHAW (Epsom), after expressing his appreciation of the two papers, said, that although both the writers had faced the question in most of its phases, generally speaking he could not say that they had looked in the face the root causes of a very large percentage of the vagrancy that obtained to-day. He did not believe in the transfer of the administration to the police as recommended by the Departmental Committee. (Cheers.) Between the lines he read that the past administration of this phase of the Poor Law had been too humane to satisfy a great many. They had to remember that, while the Poor Law in its spirit and in its scope was passed in 1834, during the last twenty-five years there had been a great change in the spirit of the time, and he maintained that whatever change was made in the body charged to administer that phase of relief the country would not stand a less humane spirit than had obtained during the last fifteen or twenty years. (Hear, hear.) As to the root causes of vagrancy to-day, there were some very significant and instructive figures given by Mr Mott, which he appreciated very much, but the interpretation of the meaning of those figures which had been put upon them by Sir W. Chance he certainly disputed. (Hear, hear.) Take the county of Stafford for instance, which, out of a population of 1,200,000, contributed only 436 vagrants. Stafford included a district of populous towns, known as the Staffordshire potteries. It also included mining districts, that were very populous. Ninety per cent. of the population were of the working classes, and yet out of the 90 per cent. the contribution to the vagrant class was practically *nil*. What was the explanation? The explanation was that the educational conditions of the county of Stafford in those industrial centres had been thirty years ahead of the educational advantages for

the same class of children in the home counties. They could go into the Staffordshire potteries, or read the "Educational Year Book," and they would find that from the purely industrial classes for two generations, though the demand for efficiency in those centres was greater than ever, yet they had always been able to supply that efficiency, and the consequence was that they did not have any of their people pushed out of the ordinary wages of industrial life by ignorance. Then their continuation and evening schools, as compared with the same schools in the home counties, were much more largely taken advantage of. In Burslem last year, in three evening schools, it was found that the majority of the students had been working ten hours in the factories, and in the evening they gladly spent two or three hours in studying things that applied to the industry in which they intended to earn their living. Those three schools last year earned in Government grants as much as thirty-three schools of the same class in the county of Surrey. That educational aspect of the question was very seldom faced. Shakespeare told us that the only darkness that was upon England in his time was ignorance, and Plato said, hundreds of years before Shakespeare, that vice was ignorance; and the root cause of vice, and the root cause of vagrancy in this country at the present moment, was ignorance. In regard to the question of uniformity, it was mentioned that morning that they would have uniformity coincident with the uniformity that was brought about by the Education Act of 1902. But what did that Act cost to the ratepayers of the country? When the educational authorities and the School Boards were abolished, it had cost the ratepayers millions to provide new authorities: and he warned them that in the transfer of the administration of this phase of Poor Law, the ratepayers would be involved in the expenditure of millions beyond the £15,000,000 a year that was now spent on what was known as non-remedial measures. (Hear, hear.) How could they expect it to be remedial—how could they expect the Guardians to make it remedial—when the regulations imposed upon them by the Local Government Board limited the power of their supervision and administration, and when they only left them the "effects" to deal with, who had reached the age of fifty or sixty years? From a careful examination of many of those people, he found that they were brought up with educational advantages that rendered it impossible for them, when they arrived at a certain age, to remain in the industry in which their parents worked, or to perform their labour with the efficiency required by the new economic conditions in which this country had got to conduct its industrial prosperity. Therefore, his advice was, that before they called for a change in the law, they should endeavour to get the scope of their administration enlarged, so that they could deal with the educational and social difficulties of those particular counties in England from which was bred a generation of inefficients, whom they had got to provide for when they got to fifty or sixty years of age. (Cheers.)

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT (Fulham) said he had a suggestion to make to the Conference which, he hoped, would be accepted by the Committee. He was exceedingly interested in what he regarded as the most valuable speech of the Chairman, and he wished that that speech could be printed quite apart from the report of the proceedings. He was certain that if Guardians could have copies of that speech printed in a cheap form and distribute them, it would do an immense amount of good. (Hear, hear.)

The SECRETARY said he would take it as an instruction from the Conference that Mr Propert's suggestion should be acted upon. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT said that the question of vagrancy had been before the country not for a year but for centuries. The Poor Law made the vagrant, and he supposed therefore as Poor Law Guardians it was their duty to unmake him. (Hear, hear.) They had had two very valuable papers. The first paper seemed to him to be valuable because it threw a glimpse of original light upon a very dark subject, and it suggested treatment instead of mere repression. Repression might be regarded as treatment, but it was scientific treatment, and the first paper suggested a treatment that was remedial and not merely repressive. To his mind social diseases might be regarded something in the light of physical diseases. When a physician examined a patient he endeavoured to find out the cause of the disease, and when he had ascertained the cause he applied a remedy, sometimes even by a counter irritant. Certainly he never kept the disease in, and it seemed to him that if they were to deal with that difficult problem it must be rather from the remedial side than the repressive. (Hear, hear.) He therefore associated himself with Mr Mott's paper, which suggested treatment under existing arrangements, which he really believed were good enough, rather than by a wholesale transfer to an inexperienced authority. (Hear, hear.) He would not say a word against the police, they were very good friends of his—(laughter)—but the police were certainly steeped to the lips in the spirit of repression. Mr Mott's paper again was valuable in showing them those unconscious and very often unobserved influences which were all the time loosening the fabrics of society in which we lived. He thought they were indebted to him for the trouble he had taken in compiling those statistics relating to bankruptcy and the weakening of the marriage tie. (Hear, hear.) He was convinced more and more that the Poor Law Guardians would have to approach these questions, especially the question of vagrancy, as students, and that they would have to cease being satisfied with the mere administration of a drug, that drug being the Poor Law. The second paper, although valuable from some points of view, was rather of a negative character. It was intended to praise the Report, but he really thought it cursed it. (Laughter.) In the first place, Mr Willink said, "We must not be too confident that any scheme will be really successful which is not sooner or later accompanied by improvements in the moral and

material condition of the poor as a whole." He asked them as reasonable men and women did they think that the transfer to the police authorities would bring about either the moral or the physical improvement of the poor. (Cries of "No.") Certainly he did not think it would. His own view was, the further they kept them away from the police authorities the better, and the more they kept them under the Guardians the better it would be for the State and the poor. Then Mr Willink thought that "a class of 'habitual vagrants' should be defined by statute, including 'any person who has been three or more times convicted within, say, twelve months, of certain offences now coming under the Vagrancy Act, viz., sleeping out, begging, refusing to perform task of work in casual wards, or refusing or neglecting to maintain himself so that he becomes chargeable to the poor rate,' a definition which can be utilised for the troublesome class of 'ins-and-outs'" (sec. 221). He was against the establishment of a new class, as he wanted to get away from the feudal system and come more to freedom. (Hear, hear.) They now had a legal definition of a child, apart from its parent, it had a legal status (the unemployed had a legal status, and the vagrant had a legal status), and Mr Willink proposed that it should be more and more defined. That he thought was bad in principle. (Hear, hear.) Returning to Mr Mott's paper, that gentleman showed that a transfer to the police would not produce that uniformity which Sir William Chance and Mr Willink thought would be produced. From what he gathered, there was as much variety of administration under the police authorities as there was under the Guardians. Sir William Chance said that regulations might be issued by the Home Office which would produce that uniformity in police administration, but if so, he asked why was it that regulations and orders which were issued by the Local Government Board did not produce that uniformity—why should regulations issued by the Home Office produce it, and why should regulations issued by the Local Government Board fail? There were now between 600 and 700 Poor Law authorities, and something like 400 police authorities, and the care of the women and children would still remain under the care of the Guardians, and they would then have confusion of authority and something like 1,100 authorities dealing with the vagrant who neglected his wife and children. They would have "confusion worse confounded" more than at present. He regarded the Report of the Committee as a very valuable contribution to the information they already had upon the subject—he did not want to throw cold water upon those who had worked so hard in that Committee, and upon Sir William Chance, who had taken a special interest in the Report—but he could not say that the case was proven for the substitution of the police for the Guardians, neither did he think that the suggestions in the Report would bring about uniformity, and therefore he associated himself almost entirely with Mr Mott. He disagreed upon those particular points, and he hoped the Conference would also disagree with Mr Mott in suggest-

ing the use of the Unemployed Bill—what they wanted to do with that Bill was not to help its continuance but to get it out of the way, and he hoped that that Bill would be withdrawn, it had not met the case, and he believed that it had very much confused the work of the Poor Law Guardian. He hoped that the Conference would come to the conclusion that what they wanted was one definite authority for the relief of the destitute upon whom they could always fix responsibility, and he hoped that they would move in the direction of resolving that the question of the vagrant should be referred to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law for further consideration.

Mr F. J. ALLISON (Clerk, Malling Union) said there were one or two points he would like to mention, and first of all he would like to emphasis the distinction there must always be between the urban and the rural authorities. What applies to urban districts in this matter did not also apply to rural Unions, and for his own part he favoured the recommendation of the Departmental Committee that the police authority should take this work of looking after the vagrant. The reverend gentleman who had just spoken had talked about the Guardians dealing humanely with the vagrant, but what did the large majority of Guardians do with him. He believed that nine out of ten Guardians would tell them that they wanted to be "shut" of the whole thing. The present system they must admit had proved a failure. He spoke generally of country Guardians, with whom he had discussed the subject; generally speaking they had no real interests in the vagrant because he belonged to a floating population and not to their own. While Guardians would give the greatest care and attention to their own poor, they always liked to hear as little as possible about this question of vagrancy. He said by all means let the police in the country districts take this matter over. Take a country Union of 250,000 persons. As a rule they had twenty-five constables who were able to cover the whole of the district. It was the desire to cling to power that made some of the Guardians anxious to keep the vagrants under their charge, but as he had said he hoped that the Report of the Committee would be adopted, and they would get colonies established perhaps by the help of philanthropic people. He himself visited the Hadleigh Colony, and was very much impressed by the way in which it was worked.

Mr T. R. WALL (Fulham) said he wished to identify himself with the arguments used in the Minority Report by Captain Eardley Wilmot. Captain Wilmot went to the crux of the whole matter, for he said: "The knowledge of men of this class which I have gained as Governor of both convict and local prisons, and more recently as an Inspector, has convinced me that no alteration in treatment within the limits that would be allowed in this country could affect their number. Causes for increase must be looked for in the social and economic conditions of the period under discussion. I may add that this is the opinion of every thoughtful

and experienced prison official with whom I have discussed the question."

Having read the Report of the Departmental Committee, he was very much struck with one thing, and that was, although the Committee had given them an exhaustive Report of the way the vagrant had been treated for a number of years, and although they had brought before them a lot of figures and placed certain things before them, they had lost sight of one thing, and that was the real meaning of the figures. (Hear, hear.) They would see from the Report that there was always an increase in vagrants during the periods of unemployment. Whenever trade was bad, or even when trade was not bad, for at the present time they were told that trade was good, there were certain economic questions which were at the root of the evil, were now produced by labour-saving machines which had their effect upon the labour market, and large numbers of workmen were unable to find work to do. According to that Report they had 70,000 in common lodging-houses, and besides that 70,000 they had their unemployed workmen who had wives and families. Through those two sources they got their vagrants, and therefore it seemed to him that the figures before the Committee should have suggested something to deal with the cause rather than with the effect. In their Report they would find that the casuals between 16 and under 35 numbered 2,156, from 35 up to 65 they numbered 6,143. He was a workman, and he knew from practical experience that as soon as grey hairs showed on a man an employer did not give him the same chance of a place as what he gave to a younger man. (A voice: "Where does Christianity come in?") It was not a question of Christianity, it was a question of making profits, and when people were doing that they did not consider Christianity—they were going in to make profits, and where that was the case Christianity did not come in any more in a country like England, which was professedly religious, than in France, which he was given to understand did not believe in Christianity. It did seem to him that something should be done for the unemployed, especially for the man who was willing to work. They had the fact that in Fulham 2,000 unemployed workmen registered themselves on the Distress Committee's register last year. It was from that class they were going to get their vagrants. It seemed to him that if the Departmental Committee were again to consider the matter and urge upon the Government the necessity of providing work for those men, they would be doing something tangible, and that was the best way of dealing with the problem. Mr John Burns, the President of the Local Government Board, had told them that he intended devoting £200,000 for the benefit of the unemployed, but according to figures based on trade union reports there were 500,000 unemployed in the country—just imagine £200,000 being distributed for the benefit of 500,000 people. The cause was the increase in labour-saving machinery. He did not blame the capitalist, but it did seem to him that the unemployed

problem was the first cousin to the question of vagrancy, and he hoped that the Departmental Committee would look at the matter in that light.

Rev. W. W. KELLY (Westhampnett) said that the proposal to place the casual wards under the police did not commend itself to him, and he wished it were possible to bring a resolution to that effect before the Conference. The police were always associated with punishment, and vagrants were not always men who deserved punishment. In the next place policemen were always men—Guardians were something much better. (Laughter.) Guardians were women as well as men, and although he quite agreed with what the Chairman had said about the economic question, they must always remember that it did not do to be guided by one idea. Sometimes in dealing with these people they wanted to be guided by very strict ideas of justice, and sometimes by mercy—(hear, hear)—and he was glad that those two qualities were brought into the casual wards. It might be said that the treatment was not effective, and that the numbers increased. He granted that was so, but speaking as a country parson, his experience was that while the numbers would increase, the vice of the vagrant did not increase. He was an advocate for local self-government, and under that system the members of Boards of Guardians gave personal care and attention to the poor. It was said that they had whims and wishes. Granted—but to the best of their ability they acted on reason, and if they, pigmies, had got whims and wishes, had not the big giants got them also? (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Was there always as much wisdom under the clock-tower of Westminster as under the clock-tower of village Unions? They had heard a lot of the wretched poor vagrant, but there was another vagrant whom they suffered from in the country, who had not been alluded to—the wealthy vagrant. (Laughter.) There were many people in his parish who might give these people employment in gardening and other odd jobs, but they would not employ such. There was one point in Mr Willink's paper with which he totally dissented, and that was when he talked about the "innocent child," whereas, as a matter of fact, it was only the infants who were innocent. Personally he believed that if they could instil into the mind of every man, rich and poor, the dignity of labour, that they would get to the bottom of this question of the vagrant.

Rev. H. PALMER (Thetford) said he would not have thought of taking up the time of the Conference had it not been for the fact that he had been Chairman of a Board of Guardians for many years, and lately he had been appointed Chairman of the Vagrancy Committee of his own county. In the first place, he would like to say how pleased he was to have heard Mr Mott's paper, because it so entirely traversed the Report of the Departmental Committee. At the same time he was rather sorry to have noticed throughout the meeting the feeling that if you entrusted anything to the police you

immediately associated it with crime. (Hear, hear.) Our police in this country were not like the police abroad, who carried a sword and terrified the people. Our police were the most kindly of men, and if he wanted to get across a street, and was rather feeble, he should ask a policeman, and he was sure one would take him across very kindly. (Laughter.) Then, again, if he wanted to find his way about London, he should ask a policeman, and he felt sure he would get very good information. (Renewed laughter.) If he was a casual in search of work—a *bona-fide* man wanting employment—he would rather find himself in the hands of a body like the police than he would be turning in and out of a lot of Workhouses, in which he might be treated well or badly. (Laughter.) He would like to say a word or two on the Committee's Report, and the first was with regard to the women and children. To him it was the saddest possible sight to see women and children tramping about the country, especially on a wet day. As a rule the cause was intemperance, either on the part of the man or the woman, and he thought it very hard upon country parishes that they should have to deal with such cases. They had lately established a system for the relief of all destitute wayfarers in the county of West Sussex. The scheme determined upon was that waybills be granted by the masters of the Workhouses to casual paupers who could give satisfactory evidence either that they had worked at some employment (other than a casual job) within a recent period, say three months, and that they had reasonable grounds for expecting to get work at a place to be named, or that they have some other good ground for desiring to go to some particular place. This waybill was in the nature of a passport, and would be (as a rule) given to the deserving casual at or near the commencement of his journey (in an envelope), and would carry him through. It would contain a blank space, on which the Workhouse master of every casual ward where such casual called would enter the name of the Workhouse and the dates of his arrival and departure. The bearer of a waybill would only be detained one night at the casual ward, and on his leaving would be given an order for bread and cheese, to be obtained at a specified place on his journey. All casual paupers who came to a casual ward without a waybill would be detained for the period specified in the Order as to casual paupers of 1882. Reverting to the Report of the Committee, he was very much struck with the idea of 1s. 4½d. a day being sufficient for keeping a man, and in health too. (Laughter.) He did not know whether the gentlemen who drew up the Report had tried it themselves, but if they had he thought their Report would have come to them a little more consistently. For his own part he was rather sceptical about the 1s. 4½d. a day. (A Voice: "You would not like to live on it.") Well, he did not know, as he had never tried it, but if he could it would do away with a lot of trouble in paying bakers' and butchers' bills, and in hiring cooks. (Laughter.) He hoped the discussion they had had would be of

great effect, and that when the question was reconsidered it would be dealt with, not only on remedial lines, but on educational and practical lines. (Hear, hear.) He hoped that their President's address would be widely circulated in every Union, because it went down to the very bed-rock of the question, and as long as they took their stand upon that they could not go very far wrong. (Cheers.)

Mr E. GARRITY (Holborn) said he could not do better than read to the Conference one or two points from a paper on the casual which he submitted recently to the Metropolitan Relieving Officers' Association. He said in that paper that the provision made for casuals is the most unsatisfactory part of the Poor Law system, and cannot be much improved without legislation. It has encouraged, if not created, a class of habitual and semi-contented vagrants, to whom the allotted task is comparatively easy, whilst to the deserving man or woman in search of work, it is a cruel infliction. To the habitual casual the ward is a conveniently situated and cheap hotel, to which he can repair once a month; and his going and coming are so scientifically arranged that his return to a particular parish can be calculated to a day. Vagrants, as they come under the Poor Law, have been divided into three classes: (1) Those who cannot work; (2) those who can work but will not; and (3) those who can work and will. The first ought to be in the Workhouse; and the second should, as Ruskin suggested in 1862, "be set under compulsion of the strictest nature, to the more painful and degrading forms of necessary toil," until he shall "come to sounder mind respecting the laws of employment." For the third class, the genuine tramp in search of work, there is nothing to be suggested at present but help by means of labour bureaux, provision of food and lodging in the Workhouse, and assistance on his journey by means of a ticket entitling him to food at fixed stations along the route specified thereon. This system has been in force in many counties with varying success. The chief needs are greater popular interest and greater uniformity in the administration of the law. With the growth of enlightenment, and the spread of humane ideas amongst all classes, may we hope that the worn-out, deserving worker will be maintained in self-respect in his old age; the temporary disabled will be helped without pauperisation; the children will be started in life without stigma; the professional shirker will be forced to earn his own living; the vicious and criminal will be put under restraint? Pauperism will be blotted out; poverty will be a social disease; and idleness will be a social crime. This may be to-day a fantastic dream, but the dreams of to-day may be the facts of to-morrow. (Cheers.) It might be that the dream of Tom Hood when he put the words in the mouth of the worker would soon be realised:—

"I want no parish relief,
No pauper's bread for me;
A son of the soil,
By right of toil,
Entitled to my fee.

No alms I ask, give me the task,
Here are the arm, the leg,
The strength and sinew of a man
To work and not to beg."

(Cheers.)

Mr J. P. KING said he was not at all sorry that the discussion had taken the line it had. Whilst there were very many things recommended in the Report which one could thoroughly endorse, there were just one or two which seemed to him to be impracticable, and, mainly, the proposal which had been deprecated by most of the speakers—to transfer the care of the vagrant from the Guardians to the police. (Hear, hear.) For one thing he did not think that such a scheme would be practicable. The present wards in the Workhouses could not be used for the purpose, and they would be obliged to build to enable the police to carry out their duties. That was one of the chief reasons why he thought that portion of the Report was so objectionable. Again, he had yet to learn that if a man was to be supplied with a ticket it would not be as valuable if he obtained it from a relieving officer as one from a policeman. (Hear, hear, and laughter.) Personally he thought it would be far more valuable. (Hear, hear.) The relieving officer was surely better acquainted with the people in his district than were the police. They were told that the female tramps were to be admitted to the Workhouse. What came then? What were they going to do for them if they were detained at the Workhouse a night? He presumed they could give notice and go out the following day. Did anybody suppose that these women were going to remain shut up for the remainder of their natural lives in Workhouses, when they had been accustomed to tramp the country? That portion of the Report was exceedingly weak, and unless they could deal with the females as well as with the males, what good was any alteration at all? (Hear, hear.) He would like to see that particular matter considered again by the Departmental Committee.

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT asked whether he would be in order in proposing a resolution to the effect that the Conference was against the proposal of the Departmental Committee to transfer the powers of Boards of Guardians in relation to vagrants to the police authorities?

The PRESIDENT said he was afraid it would not be in order to propose such a resolution, as there was a rule that no resolution should be placed before the Conference. Before he called upon the readers of the papers to reply, he would like to say one or two words on the question under discussion. Mr Mott, at the close of his paper, spoke very truly of the great progress that had been made in this country under the Poor Law system during the last seventy years. That was a remark which he was perfectly entitled to make, and to a very great extent it was true, for without doubt they had effected enormous improvements in many things. They had practically changed the whole character of pauper education, and in no

branch had they made greater progress than in that. Everybody also would agree that the treatment of the sick poor had been enormously improved, but in this question of vagrancy, although he did not wish to assume a pessimistic tone, as far as his experience was concerned we were very much where we were thirty or forty years ago. (Hear, hear.) He believed his first acquaintance with vagrancy was in the years 1869-70, in both of which years he was employed by the then President of the Local Government Board to make special inquiries into vagrancy, and the facts which he then found were very much the same facts as the Departmental Committee had found this year. We really had made very little progress, and what he would like to suggest was that the matter now was really ripe for decision. With great deference to Mr Propert and Mr King, he really would deprecate referring the question again to the Poor Law Commission. After all it was a very special subject. Vagrants did differ very much from other classes of poor. (Hear, hear.) He noticed that a question put to Mr Parr by the Departmental Committee was numbered 11,046. Therefore the Committee must have put at least 12,000 questions, and did any one honestly believe that if the Royal Commission were to put another 12,000 to witnesses whom they called before them, they would be in any better position to come to a decision? (Cries of "No," and a voice, "Try it.") As he had said before, vagrants were a very special class. The Guardians of a Union were fully competent to deal with the residents in that Union, but the vagrants were like a river that was running through a large district—they were always moving, they were constantly changing, and to suppose that the Guardians of each individual Union could deal satisfactorily with them, appeared to him very much like the same thing as if they were to hand over the management of the River Thames from the Board of Conservators and give it into the hands of the riparian owners along the whole of the river. It was practically impossible. He was afraid there was a good deal of truth in what Mr Allison had said, that there were a good many Guardians who really did not care very much about this question of vagrancy. The question of cost was a mere flea-bite, and he was afraid there were a good many Guardians who wished to get rid of the vagrants on as easy terms as possible. They strongly opposed detention when it was first introduced, and if they could get rid of casuals quickly that was all they wanted. The subject was a very difficult and unpleasant one, but he would suggest that they had got quite enough evidence, and they as Guardians had better make up their minds one way or the other.

Sir W. CHANCE, in reply to a question, said that the Departmental Committee had not gone into the question of what the cost would be if the transfer was made to the police. They had not regarded the question so much from the point of view of cost as of better treatment.

Mrs E. GRAVES (Hammersmith) said she wished to say that she was strongly against any fresh body being formed to deal with vagrants. She was very jealous of Guardians' work. (Hear, hear.) She had been a Guardian now for twelve years, and she disliked their work being taken away from them. First they proposed to take away their vaccination, then they took away the children, and so on until there would be only one Relief Committee to deal with, and that she believed the central unemployed body would take in time, so that the Boards of Guardians would be wiped out entirely. She entirely objected to this proposal to transfer the charge of vagrants from them to the police authorities. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT said the Chairman had appealed to them to make up their minds. He felt that they had made up their minds—a very large section of the Conference—and they wanted to express their opinions by way of a resolution. He believed that the sense of the Conference was against any transfer, and he would like to know whether it would be possible for him to move the suspension of the rule to which the President had referred, so that they might pass a resolution on the subject and forward it to the Local Government Board.

The PRESIDENT said he was afraid he must decide against Mr Propert as a question of order. (Hear, hear.) In his opening address he suggested that it might be well to consider whether the organisation of the Conference might not be in some respects improved. It might be very desirable that resolutions should be proposed at the Conference, but as at present constituted, the Delegates who had been sent up by the Boards of Guardians had been sent up in the knowledge that it was not the habit of the Conference to divide, and therefore it would not be fair to allow a resolution.

The CLERK to the Portsmouth Union said that at the Central Conference resolutions were allowed, and originally the procedure there was the same as theirs was now. The rule had also been relaxed at the South-Eastern Conference.

The PRESIDENT said he must adhere to his ruling. His own view was that although it might be very desirable to alter the rule in the future, it could not be done on the present occasion.

Sir W. CHANCE said that the question of putting resolutions to the Conference was decided upon after he became Hon. Secretary, and it was recommended by the Committee and decided upon by the Conference that resolutions should not be put. That had been the rule for many years now, but it had always been a difficulty because at the Conference two districts met together. He had always wished that London could have its own Conference, leaving the counties outside to hold their own, because in a Conference which combined London and the country, it was impossible to have resolutions and divisions because the question of Poor Law presented itself to town and country in different aspects. He might remind Mr Propert that

the question of vagrancy was going to be discussed at a meeting of all the Guardians of the country at the Central Poor Law Conference next February. No doubt resolutions were allowed there, and Mr Propert would be in order in proposing it at that gathering.

Mr H. G. WILLINK said that before the rules were altered resolutions were proposed at the Conference, and he believed he had known them to be proposed since. First and foremost the Conference existed for the interchange of opinions, and therefore the Delegates who were chosen were not always chosen because they were the best representatives to express the views of their Boards, but in order that they might come and learn something. Therefore those were not necessarily always the persons who ought to voice the concerted opinion of Boards of Guardians from which they came. Then again it was usually the case that when resolutions were proposed they came at the end of the gatherings, when there were very few Delegates left, and therefore it was thought that it would be best not to allow resolutions on the matters that were discussed.

Mr E. J. MOTT, in replying on the discussion, regretted that the suggestion that this matter should be referred to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law had been discouraged. Since the Vagrancy Committee was appointed a new state of affairs had arisen: a new Act had been passed, new machinery was being established, and although, as Sir W. Chance said, this machinery did yet not cover the country, yet it must be remembered that to a great extent the purposes of this Act were now being fed by national funds, and even if the machinery itself did not cover the country, yet he certainly thought that the Act should be made to serve a national purpose. The Committee took evidence some two or three months after that new Act had been passed, but they took no evidence respecting it. No mention was made in the report concerning the Act, and on that ground he thought a case had been made out for a reconsideration of the question. (Hear, hear.) The two papers had been before the Conference, and what was the difference between them? They both aimed at checking and repressing vagrancy; they both aimed at protecting the wretched creatures that infested our streets from their own miserable conditions; they both aimed at rescue where rescue was possible; where, then, was the difference? Simply as to the means. He took it that the great point in the Vagrancy Committee's Report was the labour colonies. He was quite in agreement with the Committee that those colonies would serve a useful purpose, but according to the Report, how were these people to reach the colonies? Only by means of a course of crime—the way was going to be made easy for such people, a system of easy punishment terms for law-breaking was to be instituted which might have the effect of encouraging crime, and he could not possibly agree with that. (Cheers.) The net that would be provided was too weak, the big fish would break through, the mesh was too large for the small fry, they would slip through, and he was afraid that the results would not

come up to expectations. If his system were applied, the very day it came into operation the seven, eight, or nine thousand vagrants using the wards would at once receive a check ; at every step they took this check would be applied, until in the course of time so irksome would this be found, that many would resume their ordinary places in the ordinary ranks of life, and for which they would not necessarily be entirely unfitted. Under such a system he believed it would be found that fewer vagrants would be created in the future. (Hear, hear.)

Mr H. G. WILLINK also briefly replied to the criticisms that had been passed on his paper. He remarked that although he saw no necessity for the question being referred to the Royal Commission on the Poor Law, he took it that it was within the scope of their reference, and he dare say they would have it before them. He did not think, however, that they would examine witnesses on the subject. It had been remarked that his paper was rather negative. Well, he intended it to be so. It was intended to set forth the effect of the Committee's Report, and as to the result being negative as far as the treatment of tramps went, it was only negative treatment they could bring to bear upon them. One wanted to get them back into the ordinary ranks of labour, but it was exceedingly difficult, as some men were born with the instinct for wandering about the country. As to the importance of causes outside the Poor Law, he thought he had made it clear that he considered that was a most important matter, but it was not quite within the scope of the reference of the Committee. They could not go into the questions of education and trade, they were not referred to them, they only had to consider the reference which could be found in the Blue-book. As to the transfer to the police, he was not one of those who thought that so very essential a part of the Report, but he thought that uniformity was absolutely essential. If that could be obtained in some other way by merely strengthening the regulations of the Local Government Board, he did not much care whether or not it was done through the police. As to Mr Mott's suggestion that it should be worked rather through the Distress Committees, he was not very much inclined to bring unemployed workmen in connection with the rates ; and lastly, he might say that, at all events in Bradfield, they still thought that a child of six months old was innocent. (Laughter.)

The Conference then adjourned.

FRIDAY, 30TH NOVEMBER.

Mr MORTON LATHAM (Farnham) then read the following paper:—

OUTDOOR MEDICAL RELIEF: ITS USE AND ABUSE.

BY MR MORTON LATHAM.

Chairman, Farnham Board of Guardians.

MEDICAL relief, as a distinct recognised necessity for the poor, dates from the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, 1834, and as a fitting preamble to this paper I venture to quote from the greatest Poor Law authority then living.*

“ Previous to the passing of the Poor Law Amendment Act, there was no express authority for medical relief. The statute of Elizabeth makes no mention of it, and the subsequent Acts relating to the poor are silent on the subject. Although in the absence of any express provision, medical relief had in all parts of the kingdom been more or less furnished to the poor, it must be admitted that the principle of the new law aimed at restricting medical in common with every other established mode of relief, and sought to render the labouring population provident and self-reliant in all the various contingencies of life. The wants of sickness are not, it is true, of the same certain daily occurrence as the want of food, but they may be provided for by the exercise of proper forethought, as in the case of house-rent or clothing. There is, however, this difference, that sickness destroys a man's capacity for labour, and if he has failed to make timely provision, when sickness overtakes him he is at once prostrated, becomes in himself helpless, and is of necessity compelled to look to others; whereas if a pressing want or urgency assail him whilst in health,

* “ A History of the English Poor Law,” by Sir George Nicholls, K.C.B., revised edition by H. G. Willink, Vol. II., p. 319.

he may, by earnest effort, meet it and rise above it. Whilst therefore adhering, in their entirety, to the principles of the Poor Law Amendment Act, we may yet admit that medical relief is, in its nature, not only the least objectionable of all modes of relief, but that it is within reasonable limits admissible, and in the existing state of society, even necessary. It must, however, at the same time be admitted, that with respect to the labouring population the casualty of sickness is capable of being provided for in a most unobjectionable manner, by the establishment of 'independent sick clubs'; and in proportion as these prevail, would the call for medical relief under the Poor Law be lessened, while the people would become more provident and self-reliant."

We all know that the underlying principle of all Poor Law relief is that a destitute person, however criminal may have been the cause of his destitution, shall not be condemned to suffer the extreme penalty which nature imposes on the animal that does not provide itself with the necessities of life—death.

Medical relief is but an extension of this principle, accompanying an advancing civilisation which requires that a destitute person, if in need of medical advice, shall not by want of providence be deprived thereof for himself or for those dependent on him. The principle is the same as that which provides out of the rates for the Christian burial of a pauper. Medical relief having been decided on, it would obviously follow that that relief should be given in the applicant's own home in all cases in which the patient can be treated as well at home as in an infirmary. Not only is such treatment in the particular case less costly than removal to an infirmary, but it is also more humane. Why remove a person who can be treated in his own home from the comforts of that home and the circle of his family? We have but to picture the situation to satisfy ourselves that the use of outdoor medical relief

is obviously commendable. And with the picture before us, the possibility of abuse is lost sight of, and it is a mere platitude to say that the less an abuse is foreseen the greater it will grow; and the greater it grows the more difficult will its removal become.

Dare any one say that outdoor medical relief should be abolished? I think not. The whole system of Poor Law relief may be changed, but in some form or other medical attendance on the poor in their own homes will continue. What we have to consider is, whether the present method of giving that relief is satisfactory, or if it is not capable of modification in such ways as may continue its use and diminish the chances of abuse.

A relieving officer can quickly and with fair accuracy ascertain if an applicant for outdoor relief, man or woman, is able-bodied, is in or out of work, if there is or is not food in his house, and generally if the case is or is not one in which the law authorises outdoor relief; and, if out-door relief is lawful, he can further satisfy himself if it is a case in which he can recommend it or not. Moreover, he feels that, even if the case is not in his opinion suitable for outdoor relief, no extreme hardship will be inflicted by offering the house.

On the other hand, where the application is for medical relief, most of the relieving officer's safeguards disappear. The thought that a medical order alone will not do much harm rises in his mind; and, not unnaturally, he becomes less strict in his inquiries, and more sympathetic with the applicant. Instead of the moral support resulting from a knowledge that a refusal of the order will do no serious harm, he cannot but be influenced by the knowledge that if he refuses a medical order and peradventure death occurs, he is under a serious responsibility, and that his conduct will probably be severely criticised at an inquest. The case is a doubtful one. The relieving officer has not

time to test some of the representations of the applicant, it is only an application for a medical order. He yields and gives the order. The doctor visits; perhaps he finds that there is not much the matter, but milk and beef-tea never do much harm. He is a kind man. He sees much of the poor, and feels for them; perhaps he thinks little of the heredity of pauperism, so he recommends medical extras. Again, the relieving officer dare not go against the recommendation of the doctor, even if he thinks that the food which is, let us say, wanted for a wife or child could have been provided by the applicant. Have we not heard this sort of conversation on Board day:—A Guardian: "Why was this given?" Relieving officer: "Doctor's orders, sir." Guardians have power to refuse to grant medical extras, and although they cannot make the attendance of the doctor a matter of loan, they can make the grant of medical extras on loan. But the same feeling that a time of sickness is not the time for severity or strictness that influenced the relieving officer, affects the Guardians, and they confirm the action of their relieving officer.

If the applicant, in such a case as the above, is an impostor, he has got what he wanted. He has provided for illness without subscribing to a medical club or to any provident society; he has got food without paying for it; and, worst of all, he has taught his children how, in their generation, to do the same thing.

I know that some Boards have devised a way of giving medical relief on loan by entering into an agreement with their outdoor medical officers to pay them on each case instead of by salary, so that the cost of each case can be charged to the applicant. But the plan has not had encouragement from headquarters, on the ground, I believe, that it tempts the medical officers to make and lengthen cases. Personally, I have a higher opinion of the medical profession. Surely Guardians might be empowered to grant outdoor

medical relief on loan, although the medical officer is paid a fixed salary. Further, I think that outdoor medical relief to an able-bodied man might be made illegal except on loan. The loans might be fixed at such a weekly sum as would teach the poor to provide against sickness by subscribing to medical or provident clubs, or to a local dispensary.

But might not the whole system of medical relief be modified to meet circumstances which did not exist fifty years ago? Is it necessary to continue the outdoor medical officer at all?

The old days in which the whole of the cleaning, and a very large part of the nursing, in a Workhouse infirmary was done by the inmates of the house are past. The character of the infirmaries has been generally altered, and many, indeed I may say most of them, are now conducted far more on hospital lines than heretofore. In the largest Unions the infirmary is a distinct establishment from the Workhouse, with resident medical officers and a complete staff of nurses. In others the infirmary, though not absolutely distinct from the Workhouse, and not having a resident medical officer, is nevertheless placed under a superintendent nurse, who is practically free from control by the master and matron of the Workhouse. It is the superintendent nurse who regulates the whole internal arrangements of the infirmary, and a pauper assistant, even as a scrubber, is never seen within its walls. The whole of the nursing is carried on in so thorough a manner that nurses can be, and are, trained there. In the smaller Workhouses all the details of the infirmary administration, including the nursing, are controlled by the matron. But in these the nursing has improved in a remarkable manner, and the pauper help is chiefly restricted to scrubbing the floors and cleaning.

Some fifteen years ago a London physician pointed out to me that on going into practice the first case with which a young doctor might have to deal might be

one which simply meant the making of death easy to an old person, and that he would have many such cases. In hospital he could not have had the chance of seeing anything of the kind, and yet the cases were the most numerous in infirmaries; and he asked me if arrangements could not be made for medical students to have a portion of their training in an infirmary. The time may come when doctors as well as nurses may be trained in Poor Law infirmaries, and this would be another step in the same direction.

Rightly or wrongly—I think that most of us will say rightly—indoor medical relief is being carried out in our infirmaries more and more every day on hospital lines. That principle having been adopted internally, ought it not to be carried out to its logical conclusion? Increased means of rapid locomotion have made it possible for a doctor, his assistants, and nurses, to work from the centre over the whole area of a single Union, which is usually comprised in a circle round the Workhouse with a radius of, approximately, ten miles.

Why should not the working of a Poor Law infirmary be more completely assimilated to the working of a hospital? The relieving officer, instead of giving an order to a local medical officer, would communicate with one medical officer at the centre in charge of the infirmary, who would be in many cases a resident officer. The relieving officer would indicate on his order the nature of the case, and if necessary call attention to urgency. The case would then be visited by the medical officer or one of his staff, who would decide whether the sick person should be treated as an in-patient or an out-patient. There would be no difficulty in dealing with the few sudden cases or cases of accident which occur. Even under present circumstances they are frequently dealt with by the nearest doctor, whether he is the Poor Law doctor or not. If, however, it should be thought necessary to provide local help for them, it might be done by local deputies

appointed by the central officer in the same manner that every district medical officer has now to appoint a deputy.

From a medical point of view I believe that such an arrangement would be more thoroughly effective than the present. It would improve the position of the principal medical officer, and so make the post more attractive to good men. It would have further incidental advantages. I know one district medical officer who rarely—I think that I might say never—gives extra medical relief, his ground being that it is not his duty to feed his patients. The officer of an adjoining district is very ready to grant the same relief on the ground that if he thinks that the patient needs food, and he has power to recommend it, he ought to do so without hesitation. I express no opinion as to which is right, but such want of uniformity is undesirable, and would disappear if the whole were under one officer.

Again, an outdoor medical officer is little loth to disburden himself of a troublesome case by recommending its removal to the house. If at the time the infirmary is full, the indoor medical officer resents the admission of a case which he thinks might have been treated outside, and which he suspects to have been sent in merely on the ground of its being troublesome. That is a conflict of which I have had experience, and which would disappear if the decision were in the hands of one officer who knew the case, and who also knew the accommodation and condition of his infirmary.

The hospital system is to divide patients into two classes, in-patients and out-patients. A patient in the out-patient department is sometimes advised to get a letter for admission into the hospital, and sometimes a patient in the hospital is told that he will do equally well as an out-patient. This principle has now been extended to the rich. A patient is in some cases attended in his own home, or he may be advised to go into a nursing home.

If the hospital system of in- and out-patients is the best for the rich and for the poor who are just above the lines of pauperism, why should it not be the best for those who have sunk below that line?

Finally, although the first thing to be considered, especially in medical matters, is efficiency, and I believe that the system suggested would be efficient, there is also the question of money economy. Such a system would involve a higher salary to the central officer, a salary in many Unions to an assistant medical officer, perhaps also to a dispenser. Yet I think that these salaries would not come to so large a sum as is now paid in a Union to the whole indoor and outdoor medical officers.

The following figures, based on two Unions, of both of which I have had intimate knowledge, will be of use to us in forming an opinion. The figures for the first, a country Union, are :—

Acreage.	Approximate Population.	Number of Paupers at Lady Day 1906.		Medical Officers.				
		In-door.	Out-door.	Salary one Indoor Medical Officer.	Salaries seven Outdoor Medical Officers.	Extra Medical Fees.	Total.	Vaccination.
41,215	50,000	597	432	£74	£350	£40	£464	£331

If one officer were appointed, he might or might not be resident in the infirmary of the Workhouse. He could visit the whole Union by means of a bicycle and a motor car, which he would occasionally hire. He ought to have a surgery and dispensary in each relieving officer's district, probably at the relieving officer's house. I put £40 as the probable annual rent of these surgeries. Would it be possible to get a

man to do the whole work for a salary of £300? If so, there would be a saving of £84 a year to the Guardians.

The medical officer, in addition to his salary, would receive the extra medical fees allowed by the Local Government Board in certain cases; he would receive fees under the Lunacy Acts; and if he were also public vaccinator he would receive fees under the Vaccination Acts. I am sure that an excellent officer would be found to take a berth worth nearly £800 a year, even if he had to spend £150 a year on locomotion.

The figures for the second, a suburban Union, are :—

Acreage.	Approximate Population.	Number of Paupers at Lady Day 1892.		Medical Officers.				
		In-door.	Out-door.	Salary one Indoor Medical Officer.	Salaries fifteen Outdoor Medical Officers.	Extra Medical Fees and 20 per cent. in lieu of Expensive Medicines.	Total.	Vaccination.
47,880	245,000	1,245	1,367	£150	£954	£204	£1,308	£457

If two medical officers, one of whom would probably be resident in the infirmary of the Workhouse, and a dispenser were appointed, assuming the rent of the local dispensaries and surgeries to be £80, and the joint salaries to be £1,200 per annum, there would be no loss to the Guardians. If these officers were also to have the vaccination fees for so populous a Union, the joint salaries might be less than £1,200 a year.

In London* there are thirty-one Poor Law

* Report of the Local Government Board for 1904-5, p. 458.

Unions; the annual salaries of the medical officers and dispensers, including extra fees, surgical appliances, drugs, &c., for these Unions amounted in 1904 to £99,711, which gives an average of £3,216 to each Union, and about 17s. per pauper. A high figure, and be it remembered that this does not include fees in lunacy cases, or vaccination fees. Out of London there are in England and Wales 615 Unions, in which the annual salaries, &c., of the medical officers amounted in 1904 to £323,843, which gives an average of £526 to each Union, and about 8s. 6d. per pauper. Why the cost per pauper in London should be double the cost in the country I am not prepared to say.

I believe that there are many good medical men who would be willing to work an average-sized Union for £400 or £500 a year. They might not have much time for private practice, but might well accept the office of Medical Officer of Health with a salary of perhaps £100 a year, and would certainly have extra medical fees and fees under the Lunacy Acts, even if they did not undertake vaccination.

Beyond the saving of money, I should hope to see greater uniformity and increased efficiency of service. A medical officer covering the whole Union would gain experience of matters not merely medical. The presence of such an officer in all parts of the Union would be a constant stimulus to relieving officers, and his advice would be of general service to his Board.

There may be Unions in which the suggested scheme could not be carried out over its whole area, but in all Unions there is a much wider district round the centre capable of being worked by one officer than was the case before the days of bicycles and motors.

It at times happens that a nurse is required for a person who has an outdoor medical order, and more often than not very incompetent nursing is provided. Might not this nursing also be worked from the in-

firmary? A nurse from the infirmary, riding a bicycle, could attend several of such cases in one day. Infirmary nursing is as hard work as hospital nursing, and it would be a great boon when a nurse is flagging to put her on to outdoor work for a few days. This change would involve a slight increase of the nursing staff, but it does not follow that the expense would be much greater than at present, and the efficiency would certainly be increased. In many cases the nurses would be competent to help the doctor in his outside work, as they do now in inside work, and I believe that there would be a saving in medical fees which would cover any extra expense in the nursing department.

Miss AMY HUGHES then read the following paper:—

NURSING OF THE OUTDOOR POOR.

By MISS AMY HUGHES,

General Superintendent, Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses.

BEFORE dealing with the nursing of the outdoor poor under present conditions, a short account of the development of district nursing may prove interesting.

The earliest mention of trained nurses to work "among the poor in their own homes" is found in the aims set forth by the Society of St John's House, founded in 1848, whose nurses received their training chiefly among the poor in their own homes; but organised district nursing dates from 1859-62, during which time it was systematically established in Liverpool by the late Mr William Rathbone.

The first society founded for the sole benefit of the sick poor in London was the East London Nursing Society in 1868. The establishment of the Metropolitan and National Nursing Association (now the Metropolitan Nursing Association) in 1874 raised the

status of district nursing by demanding a higher social and educational standard in the nurses employed.

Under the Poor Law Act, 1879 (42 & 43 Vict., chap. 54, sec. 10), Boards of Guardians were empowered to subscribe towards any association or society for providing nurses for the outdoor poor.

The gracious act of Her late Majesty in 1887 elevated district nursing from the sphere of individual effort to the position of a great national institution.

Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses was incorporated by Royal Charter in September 1889, and was endowed by Her late Majesty with £70,000, the offering of the women of Great Britain and Ireland, on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth year of her reign. The objects to which the annual income of the fund is to be applied are stated in the charter to be "the training, support, and maintenance of women to act as nurses for the sick poor, and the establishment (if thought proper) of a home or homes for such nurses, and generally the promotion and provision of improved means for nursing the sick poor."

The Metropolitan Nursing Association was adopted as the nucleus in London, and the majority of associations already established accepted conditions of affiliation.

In Scotland a central home was started in Edinburgh, and other homes in Dundee and Aberdeen. The home in Glasgow already established was affiliated.

A training home was founded for Wales at Cardiff, and nurses have gradually been introduced throughout the Principality. It is found necessary to employ Welsh-speaking nurses in many of the districts.

In Ireland St Patrick's Nurses' Home, already in existence, was affiliated, and St Laurence's Home established, both in Dublin.

The Queen's Institute is governed by a council

nominated by Her Majesty the Queen, with the approval of His Majesty the King.

The work in England, Wales, and Ireland is directly under the central Council; but the Scottish Council has from the outset accepted the management and responsibility of the work of the Institute in Scotland.

It is not surprising so widespread a movement has attracted general attention, and the appreciation of its objects is shown in the generous response to the appeals issued from time to time to maintain and extend the work of the Institute. There are also special arrangements to meet the need of country districts where there is neither work nor funds to justify the engagement of Queen's nurses, and yet where ordinary ailments and chronic cases want nursing care. More especially nurses are required for maternity cases, whether as midwives or monthly nurses. The aims of the Rural Nursing Association, which was started in 1888 to provide nurses and midwives for the country poor, affiliated to the Institute in 1891, and in 1896 entirely amalgamated with it, are now being carried out by the various County nursing associations which have arisen to meet the needs of rural districts. Under these associations women of the County are selected, trained as midwives, and also taught the elementary principles of general nursing. They work under local committees, and in affiliated counties a Queen's nurse is appointed as county superintendent, who visits and inspects their work from time to time.

This arrangement was in existence before the passing of the Midwives Act 1902, and is quite distinct from the inspection of practising midwives undertaken by County or District Councils under that Act, although in some cases County Superintendents have held the dual office.

The experience gathered under all conditions and from all parts of the country has led to the establish-

ment of special training and expert supervision of the nurses as essential principles of success.

Queen's nurses must possess full general training, a three years' course being required for a certificate from a training school under the Local Government Board. It is equally necessary, however, that this should be supplemented by district training, that they may learn to adapt their nursing knowledge to the altered conditions of patients in their own homes. This can only be gained by practical work under an experienced district superintendent.

Expert inspection is also necessary to maintain a uniform standard, and it is the evenness of the work thus obtained that makes it a success. There is no interference with local effort, no curtailing of personal energy. The inspector comes as a friend alike to the nurse and to the Committee, visiting the cases, seeing the books, and helping by her experience and advice in any difficulties that may arise.

Under the Order of 1892 (27th January 1892), Boards of Guardians may appoint district nurses and make regulations for the performance of their duties under the direction of district medical officers.

Advantage has been taken of this Order in several Unions, and nurses have been started for the benefit of patients receiving medical relief. But as neither the special training nor the expert nursing supervision were given, the results have not been altogether satisfactory. Two large Unions in Lancashire and Yorkshire respectively may be quoted where this plan had a fair trial, and was discontinued in favour of contributing to the local association where Queen's nurses were employed.

It has been asked why these nurses should have supervision when they are working under direct medical orders. A little consideration will show that a busy doctor has little time at his disposal to overlook details of nursing work. He gives instructions to be carried

out, and it is only when a nursing expert from time to time sees the cases and what is being done to each one that the method of work can be criticised.

It is a proof that this organised district nursing is appreciated, to mention that under the Order of 1879 local associations receive annual grants from Boards of Guardians, the amounts varying from £1 to £170.

All grants made to district nursing associations must be sanctioned by the Local Government Board, and it is required that poor persons in receipt of relief shall have help from the nurses of those associations in cases of necessity, of course under the district medical officer's directions. No nurses working for the Queen's Institute are allowed to take cases except under medical men.

Every Board of Guardians makes its own arrangements as to how the return of such cases is to be made, and it is not unusual for a member of the Board, often one of the lady Guardians, to be a member of the committee of the nursing association.

It is natural to think patients in receipt of relief would be better in the wards of the Workhouse or Infirmary, and it is quite true that the surroundings of some of these cases make any attempt at nursing useless in their own homes. But there are a large number of patients, especially amongst children and old people, who can derive great benefit from the services of a district nurse. The actual attention to the patient is only part of her duty. She can teach the friends and relations invaluable object lessons in cleanliness, ventilation, and the simple rules of health. Many an aged person is obliged to enter the infirmary because the relatives have no idea how to tend a feeble, bedridden patient. The district nurse teaches them what to do between her visits, and thus enables the old people to end their days in their own homes. Not only is this a solace to them and an economy to the ratepayers, but it helps to prevent the younger

generation repudiating its duty towards the elders of the community.

There is a growing tendency to organise nursing associations on the lines of provident clubs when possible, a principle approved by the Council of the Queen's Institute. But it would defeat the object for which the Institute and other associations were founded if the want of means debarred any one from the services of the nurses. Therefore the grants from the Boards of Guardians are the completion of a scheme to bring skilled nursing to the poorest of the people.

Two fundamental principles of the Queen's Institute have done much to make the nurses generally acceptable.

1. They are not allowed to become almoners.
2. They are strictly forbidden to interfere in any way with the religious opinions of the patients or of members of their families.

The work is thus raised above any suspicion of proselytising or almsgiving.

A striking testimony is given by Mr Charles Booth in his volume "Notes on Social Influences" :—

"Of all the forms that charity takes, there is hardly one that is so directly successful as district nursing. It is almost true to say that wherever a nurse enters, the standard of life is raised.

"Not only are skilled women available for every public or private emergency, not only has each city its nursing institute ready to respond to all appeals, but every little country district is finding that about £100 a year is well spent in this form of assistance to the doctor's work, by which the whole population benefits, and to which all who will can subscribe. In every neighbourhood so provided, the direct influence on health is considerable; but far greater must be the gradual educational influence exerted, which it may be hoped will eventually bring enlightenment to the common ideas of the people not only as to the special requirements of a sick-room, but on such subjects as cleanliness, the

care of young children, and the preparation of food, not for invalids alone, as well as on many other points of ordinary domestic economy, which a trained nurse will generally understand and will naturally inculcate."

DISCUSSION.

Miss ALEXANDER (Kensington) was the first speaker. She said she would like to make one or two comments on the interesting papers they had just listened to. With regard to Mr Morton Latham's suggestion that one doctor should be responsible for indoor and outdoor poor, she was afraid that it was not practicable. The resident medical superintendent of a large institution was already overworked, the average number of patients which he and his assistants had to treat was always greater than they should be. She was told on good authority that seventy was the largest number which any man could satisfactorily attend in an institution. As to sending out nurses from the Workhouse, she did not think that it would answer. District nursing was very hard work. She spoke from practical experience. It had to be done in all weathers; and just when the pressure on the wards was heavy, an extra demand for attendance outside would arise. Added to this, a district nurse needed special training. She felt certain that nurses selected and appointed by Boards of Guardians can hardly be depended on the same as Queen's Nurses could be. The nurses of that Association were hall-marked, no inquiry was necessary as to their character or nursing skill. They worked, moreover, under constant trained supervision. It had not been mentioned that last year 116,158 medical orders were given in the Metropolis, an increase of 2,000 on the preceding year. The number of midwifery cases was 1,193. It was, she thought, most unfortunate that this medical relief was given in different parishes and Unions on such different systems. Some Local Government Board regulations on the subject were much needed. For instance, in her Union all medical relief was granted on loan, and most searching inquiries were made, and applicants would have to personally see the relieving officer, even at night, before an urgent order could be obtained. In another parish orders were issued from the relief office by a porter at night, and aid could be procured with less trouble than when the relieving officer was on duty. Some Boards gave no outdoor midwifery orders; in other Unions they could be obtained without difficulty. That difference of system was also noticeable with the work of the district medical officers. Some claimed a fee of £2 on a very large percentage of cases, others did not. Variations in the way in which cases were entered upon the medical registers also existed. She knew of one excellent district medical officer who paid four, five,

or six visits to a patient at the home, and would take a real trouble to cure a case, and to get the patient into the hospital. Another district medical officer saw a case once, and invariably recommended the infirmary. One parish doctor would prescribe for cases before he had seen them, another would do his work in a thoroughly conscientious and professional manner. The conditions under which medical relief was given tended, she was afraid, to its being carried out in a way which was hasty, scamped, perfunctory, and generally unsatisfactory. She believed that the evils of indiscriminate medical relief were not at all sufficiently realised. The fact that relieving officers dare not refuse to give medical orders, and often had not time to visit the cases, lead to serious evils. On looking through the list of medical relief given on loan in Kensington recently, she had been struck by the fact that in the majority of cases in which payment had been recovered, the relief should never have been necessary at all. She should like to give one or two instances of the unsatisfactoriness of indiscriminate medical relief as given under the parish. A child whose mother was in receipt of relief was attending the Infirmary; she was ordered medicine which was nasty; this was accordingly passed down the sink, and some pink pills bought at the chemist's. (Laughter.) A small boy subject to epileptic fits was brought to the dispensary whenever the attacks became acute—in the interval he ran the streets—he was half-starved and received no education. An old woman once complained that the parish doctor had "roared at me like a bull dog, frightening me to that extent that my legs trembled so under me that I couldn't have walked down the street, not if I'd have been offered a thousand pounds, and as to touching his medicine, no, that I wouldn't." Inquiries were made next door, and a neighbour entirely endorsed the woman's statement, saying, "Indeed, she did make a dreadful noise, it might have been her husband." (Loud laughter.) Medical relief given alone was often not adequate relief. The more one went among the poor, the more one became convinced that it was principally the home conditions which needed consideration by the Guardians in each case, and that the essential requisites were thorough inquiry, and good reporting by the relieving officer, and conscientious work on the part of the district medical officer, and careful attention and consideration on the part of the relieving committee. As practical measures she wished to propose—(1) The appointment of highly qualified medical officers for the outdoor poor, with good salaries, who shall—in large Unions—give their whole time to the duties. (2) The entire abolition of the usual system of payment of midwifery fees. If an exclusive salary was not given, one fixed sum should be paid in each case, and district medical officers should not receive the inadequate payment of 10s a case for this special work. (3) Medical relief should, with some exceptions, be granted in the first instance on loan, the presence of the applicant or some representative of the committee should be insisted on. No arrears of payment should be allowed to accumulate, and

cases should be visited by the relieving officer, and, unless payments were cancelled, by the collector, without loss of time. (4) Guardians should insist on cases receiving outdoor medical relief being properly nursed when the Board subscribed to the Nursing Association. A system of monthly reports on cases attended by the nurses should be submitted by the Association. The Guardians should also be informed as to which medical officers sent in cases to the Nursing Association and which did not. (5) Some arrangements should be made for handing on cases who might join clubs, to a friendly visitor. Very special efforts should be made to prevent children from becoming familiar with all the environments of pauperism. It must be bad for children to wait their turn to see the house doctor amongst a crowd of applicants for relief. It was in preventing that that a district nurse would perhaps be most useful, as she carried out the treatment prescribed at the child's home. She would add another suggestion. She hoped that it would not be long before every large Unoin employed at least one woman assistant relieving officer. Many inquiries connected with sick women and children and the infirm of all ages did, in her opinion, come within the province of a woman. It could not be long before that view gained ground and was generally acted upon.

The CLERK to the Kensington Board of Guardians, at the request of Miss Alexander, read a return of the amounts recovered by that body in respect of medical relief during the last three years. The sums were from 1s. up to 3s. or 4s. But, said the speaker, although they were not large amounts, they must be measured by the deterrent effects they would have upon those who applied for relief. He would urge Boards of Guardians to make the most careful inquiries before granting relief, and if they thought there was the slightest possible chance of recovering the amount they should give it as a loan.

Mr F. FIELDER (Lambeth Board of Guardians) said he had had practical experience of the work which had been so fully set out in the papers. He thought they were all agreed that the question of treatment of destitute sick poor was one of paramount importance, not only to the poor themselves, but to the community in which they lived. (Hear, hear.) They had to consider the extreme ignorance which prevailed among the poor people with regard to the laws of sanitation and health. That ignorance was probably measured somewhat by the readiness with which they resorted to nostrums of the quack or to any advice which might be given by their neighbours, equally ignorant with themselves, and if the country was going to leave those people in their ignorance instead of doing their level best to help them out of it, they were simply making a running sore in the community which would affect not only the community itself but the whole nation. (Hear, hear.) The question of expense, therefore, ought not to weigh with them so very much in dealing with that very serious and important problem. In Lambeth they had taken a step

beyond that mentioned by the last speaker, and they had also carried out to a very large extent the suggestions made by Mr Latham. They had discontinued four of their outdoor medical officers, and they were working those four districts from their infirmary in Brook Street, where they had something like 670 beds. They had increased their medical staff there for that purpose, and they had arranged for the nursing staff to visit the poor sick in their own homes. The object of that was to obtain the best medical assistance for the sick poor. If those people were left to drag on in their sickness without proper care and attention, they would surely become paupers more effectually than by any other means that could be devised. (Hear, hear.) Therefore, the very best plan they could adopt in the treatment of the sick poor, wherever it was possible—certainly in London—was to deal with them from a central point, and if it was possible to group together a number of districts and work them from the infirmary. Those cases which were found to be best for treatment inside could be removed by the medical officers to the infirmary, and where it was found to be wise and humane to treat them at their own homes. They could visit them there, and have the services of a nurse who was trained for her work. They had only had a year's experience of the plan in Lambeth, and they were now proposing a plan by which they hoped to build a small place for the accommodation of the nurses, and they hoped the scheme would prove successful. They knew there were disadvantages attached to the scheme. It might be that the medical men would take into the infirmary interesting cases, rather than cases that ought to be received, simply for the purpose of acquiring additional experience and knowledge. He thought, however, that those cases would be very rare, and on the whole he believed the poor would be much better treated by being visited by the medical officers from the infirmary than if they were left to the district medical officers outside. He knew there was a great deal of trickery in medical relief. In cases of pregnancy it often happened that a man and his wife would make no provision until the very last moment, and then finding themselves somewhat stranded would apply for the services of the district medical officer. Of course in their own district such cases as that were always provided for by making the act of an order for the medical officer one given on loan, but he rarely found that those amounts were recovered. Now and then an honest man would be found who would repay the Guardians that which he had promised, but as a rule there was a tendency to avoid payment. (Hear, hear.) That was an evil which they ought to try and avoid as much as possible; but where there was need of urgent treatment for the sick poor who had no means of providing medical relief for themselves, and who were living under very misefable and distressing conditions, it was of the greatest importance that such should be treated with the greatest kindness and promptitude, and every possible means taken to bring them back to health. (Hear, hear.) He

hoped that the question might be very thoroughly ventilated. If they could by teaching the poor lead them to a better knowledge of the laws of health, if they could by the distribution of leaflets or oral instruction make them to realise how important it was for them to know what were healthy conditions of life, they would have less sickness among them and a greater readiness to relieve themselves from any dependence on the Poor Law authorities, and a greater desire to equip themselves thoroughly as good citizens of the State. (Cheers.)

Sir W. BOUSFIELD said the Conference had had two very excellent and interesting papers which had covered a very large part of the ground. He wanted to throw out one or two suggestions for consideration as to the method by which they might make outdoor Poor Law relief less harmful to the people, and if possible lead them to a spirit of providence rather than the want of it. There was no doubt whatever that the outdoor medical orders as given both in town and country did lead frequently to a pauperising spirit and to the commencement of a career of pauperism. (Hear, hear.) He wanted to know whether it was not possible in some way to graft it upon the provident system which might lead the poor into provident habits instead of their always looking forward to receive gratuitous medical assistance. One of the great wants of England were thoroughly organised provident dispensaries or clubs, by which the poor might provide for their own medical assistance. There was no doubt that such clubs did exist in many places. In the country they existed in the form of medical clubs, where the members were attended by the doctors either in their own homes or at the surgery; but in many large towns, and in London, there were a series of provident dispensaries where subscribing members were treated, being visited at their own homes where necessary. He wanted to know whether it would not be possible to affiliate outdoor medical treatment by the Poor Law to such provident dispensaries by enabling the Guardians, as they had done in the case of nursing institutions mentioned by Miss Hughes, making a contribution to the dispensaries. The great advantage of that plan would be that a poor person who received a medical order would be brought into contact with a provident dispensary, and very often he would be able to go on with his provident payments, and would be far less likely to fall back again on Poor Law medical relief. (Cheers.) He could not think that any of them were really satisfied with the present condition of affairs. (Hear, hear.) It was only a transition period—matters were changing, and he believed they were tending in the direction of a system which would be less demoralising to the people. It was only by working it under a really good system, under which the people were encouraged to be provident, that they were likely to make Poor Law medical relief less harmful in some ways and more efficient in others. The provident medical club in the country would have a certain number of doctors allotted to it over a considerable area, one doctor probably being in each village, and the

provident member who subscribed would probably have the services of the doctor living in his own village. In the case of the Poor Law patient he also would be attended by the provident club doctor in the village, and this gratuitous treatment would be paid for by the Guardians. He believed such a system would be very efficient; he did not think it would injure the existing Poor Law medical authorities in the country, and they would gradually build up a system which would lead, not to dependence, not to permanent pauperism, but to encouraging the poor man to put aside his small sum weekly in order to provide for the future. He agreed that a certain amount of improvement might be effected by making fresh rules and more restricted regulations on the part of the Guardians, but if at the same time the Guardians would work with those who were helping to spread a spirit of providence throughout the country it would be a very great advantage. Mr Warren, the Secretary of the Metropolitan Provident Medical Association, was about to give evidence before the Poor Law Commission, and he would suggest some such scheme as he (Sir W. Bousfield) had outlined. It was certainly a plan that deserved attention, because it would be an attempt to undo such evil work as necessarily resulted from the Poor Law.

Rev. E. CRAIK (Eastbourne) said that as a Guardian of Eastbourne, and rector of a country parish for twenty years, he had always been more or less an amateur relieving officer. (Laughter.) Many of the problems that had come before them that morning claimed their earnest attention, and required an immediate answer. In the country districts it was quite true that they were hopelessly in the hands of unqualified nurses, and the ignorance that existed in many villages of the very elements of sanitation was something wonderful. If the Queen Victoria Nurses would come to his parish he would be most happy. Out in the country they badly needed practical and efficient nurses, and when one thought of what women could do in this way, how one prayed to Heaven that one day they might see lady relieving officers of refined and Christian feeling. (Hear, hear.) Such ladies would be a wonderful blessing to the poor in the country districts. If he understood Mr Latham's paper aright, he rather aimed at centralisation. Now he (the speaker) rather deprecated centralisation—especially in the country. (Hear, hear.) They had a very wide district in their Eastbourne Union, and the nearest medical officer to him lived seven miles away. If it was possible he wanted to have a medical officer for each small district. (Hear, hear.) They were beginning that in Eastbourne. They had subdivided the district, and put an outlying village in the charge of a young medical man, and by that subdivision they would get scientific and accurate attention to their cases. He was afraid there was very little supervision over outdoor Poor Law medical officers. In the Boards of Guardians they trusted to Providence, to instinct, and to a number of things—(laughter)—but really he thought there was very little actual inspection or record of how those medical

officers served them. As a rule, he believed they served them very well, but he believed there was room for much more supervision. He did not wish their medical relief work to be centralised—let the doctors be scattered over the district; let the supervision be increased, and he prayed to Heaven that before long we should have women relieving officers.

Mr H. LOVELL (Westhampnett) said that he thought they were greatly indebted to the writers of both the papers, but he must say that while he thoroughly agreed with the views put forward by Miss Hughes, he was in disagreement with Mr Latham. They had four medical officers in an area that radiated about ten miles from the centre. Mr Latham spoke about the economy in appointing one man in a central position, but he did not think it was more economical—certainly it was not so efficient. Would the poor get as good attention as they did now if they had only one central officer? He thought not. (Hear, hear.) Then as to the economy; supposing they started with appointing one man, he would soon turn round and ask for assistance, as he would say that it was impossible for him to do the work. Therefore, instead of such a plan leading to economy it would tend to extravagance. When the Clerk to the Kensington Board was reading out the figures as to the amounts they had screwed out of poor people in repayment for medical relief, it made him shudder. It meant that the poor man who had scraped together the 2s. for the Guardians had done so by withholding food from his wife and children, and thereby illness was very likely to come again to the house. Was that economy? (Cries of "No.") He was ashamed to think that those figures should have been produced, and at the request of a lady too. (Laughter.) He had had a lifelong experience among the poor of Sussex, and had visited them in their homes, and he knew what a hard time they had of it. He knew of instances where there were families of seven children, the oldest ten years old, that meant nine to keep out of 14s. a week. After the man had paid his rent he would have 12s. left, and how was it possible for such a one to pay 6d. a week for the doctor? Why, it was nearly as bad as the living on 1s. 4½d. a day suggested at the first meeting of the Conference. (Laughter.) Poor people liked to have the medical man in their own locality attend them, and therefore he advocated subdividing the district for medical relief purposes. (Hear, hear.) Such a plan was better not only for the patient but for the doctor, because a local man was better acquainted with the wants of his patients than a stranger, and they were likely to be more humane than men who came to attend a patient from a distance. Bognor, where he came from, had tackled this question very successfully. They were one of the first towns to establish a District Nursing Association, which was supported by contributions of the rich people. After a time those responsible for the Association applied to the Board of Guardians for assistance, and they gave them £5. He would have liked to have made it £25, for the

nurses were superior ladies and had done a splendid work among the poor, and since they had been at work it was marvellous the small requirements that were asked for in the way of nursing from the parish. They divided the work into districts, and one nurse took three or four villages. He only wished that the Local Government Board would say that the Guardians "shall" support such nurses, not "may." (Hear, hear.) He was Chairman of the Finance Committee of his Union, and he often expected the Local Government Board to complain of their contributions for nursing, but he considered it one of the very best expenditures, and one that produced wonderful value. The nursing question could be grappled with by every country town on the same lines as they had done it. Of course London was a very different place, and the question was one that was much more difficult. He held that in country towns it was the duty of Guardians to get to know the poor personally. In this matter of medical aid, it was economy to provide it quickly and efficiently, so as to enable the man to get back to work and earn his living.

Mr WOODISON (Portsmouth), after thanking the writers of the papers, said there was one thing he could not agree with, and that was the sympathetic tone in which the last speaker had referred to the question of outdoor relief. He (Mr Woodison) did not think that outdoor relief should be made too easy. (Hear, hear.) Outdoor relief was simply a stepping-stone to pauperism in a larger degree. He admitted that where destitution existed, and ill-health stepped in, that something must be done to see that the sick poor were looked after, but he had a lot more faith in the nursing of the sick poor than he had in medical outdoor relief. He had very great faith in these institutions, which were entirely disconnected with the Poor Law—except in so far as their existence was helped by contributions from the Guardians in return for the help they gave in nursing the poor in their various localities—and he thought it would be far better for Guardians to subsidise such institutions rather than send nurses out from their own infirmaries. (Hear, hear.) He could give a very substantial reason for that course, and that was an economic one. They in Portsmouth had had practical experience in the matter. They spent a lot of money in training young girls to be nurses, and then, after a time, they called them "sisters," and immediately they obtained that name, or very soon after, the great majority of them left the Guardians' service and found better situations, and thus in many instances the poor ratepayer had educated those ladies to go out into the world and earn a better living than many of the ratepayers were making themselves. If the work was done through these nursing associations, it was done quite independent of the Guardians, and 99 out of every 100 persons who were nursed had no idea that some of the money came from the Guardians, and therefore it reduced to a minimum the connection of the sick poor with the

Poor Law, and that, he took it, was one of the objects they all had at heart. (Hear, hear.) He wanted to show them how medical out-relief and the Poor Law generally hampered the progress of thrift. Less than three years ago he had the honour of being Grand Master of the Manchester Unity of Oddfellows, which numbered one million members. He had been associated now with that Society for nearly forty years, and he spoke with experience as to the action which the Poor Law had upon the progress of such organisations. What did they find? They found that there was a section of the population which had ascertained that when they were in ill-health or in want they could obtain from the Poor Law that which their next-door neighbour, who was a thrifty man, had obtained for himself. He had in mind a typical case which occurred recently in Portsmouth. He (the speaker) was deputed to visit one of their members, who was a respectable man, and who had been earning about 25s. a week. He visited him, and found that his club medical officer was in attendance on him. The sick visitor took him his sick pay, and the medical officer from the Oddfellows tended him in his illness—all of which the man had provided for himself. Three doors away lived another man. He was working in the same shop as the first, and he had practically the same amount of money coming in every week—both of them being in permanent employment. He was taken ill, and his wife. They had made no provision for such a catastrophe as illness or being out of work, and consequently in a very short time they became destitute. After a little while that man came upon the Poor Law. Mark the injustice! He had the services of a Poor Law medical officer, and he had Poor Law out-relief. The man two doors off, in no better position, had provided for himself, and was also paying rates to help this unthrifty man. That showed very clearly how outdoor Poor Law relief, both medical and otherwise, hampered the desire of people to provide for themselves, and it was for that reason that he wanted to see outdoor relief given very guardedly and under such restrictions that most people would provide for themselves rather than apply for it. As a friendly society man he objected to the proposal of Sir W. Bousfield that they should link up provident dispensaries with Poor Law relief. He believed that if that question was put before the friendly societies it would be rejected, because they did not want their members to be mixed up in the slightest way, either directly or indirectly, with the Poor Law. The large friendly societies had a system which would do away with vagrancy to a large extent. Each of their members when out of employment was given what was called a "travelling card." Such a man did not stop in his own town and come upon the Poor Law or starve. He took his "travelling card" from district to district in search of work, and in every town he visited his society granted him relief, instead of his having to go to the Guardians.

Mrs NEVISON (Hampstead) said that if the old people could

be kept at home instead of going into the infirmary, it would be much better for them. Guardians could do a great deal of good in trying to inculcate habits of cleanliness and health among the poor, and at Hampstead the medical officer and some of the Guardians had drawn up a little leaflet giving certain rules as to how milk should be used for infants, the necessity of washing, hints on ventilation, &c.

Mrs MORRIS (Camberwell) said she could not refrain from thanking Miss Hughes for her very instructive paper. They did need instruction. There were some Guardians—particularly new Guardians, who had not served many years—who hardly knew what they could do and what they could not do. (Laughter.) They had heard one speaker say that a medical officer could send a patient to the infirmary without even seeing him. (Renewed laughter.) She thought that the Guardians would be to blame if they allowed that, because she did not think it was allowed under the law. (Hear, hear.) At their Board they were trying to make all drink cases pay the full cost, and she thought that certainly should be done everywhere. (Hear, hear.) They had a great number of cases of *delirium tremens*, many of whom stayed in the wards for six weeks at a time, and it was only right that such people who had brought the trouble on themselves should be made to pay. If they had no money at the time the Guardians tried to make them pay afterwards. As far as women relieving officers were concerned, they were in the happy position of having such at Camberwell, and it had answered admirably. (Hear, hear.) They had only had a lady for a year, but she was sure the experiment had proved successful. She visited all the bedridden patients, and she also interviewed all the single girls who were going into the maternity home. At Camberwell they subscribed to the nursing association, and those nurses visited many of their patients, and lately they had arranged with their medical officers to have the addresses of nurses, so that they could communicate with them direct if they were needed for a case.

Mr E. J. W. HUGGINS (Reading) said that at Reading for many years past the Guardians had had a very excellent system of operation in connection with the out-relief work. Every applicant for medical relief was given a printed form, calling attention to the necessity of their making some provision for sickness, either by joining a provident medical club or a friendly society. At the back of the notice was printed particulars showing what advantages could be obtained in this way, and at a very small cost. Whenever medical relief was given to a person who was eligible to join a provident society, the applicant was brought before the Board at the next meeting, and was impressed with the necessity of making provision for himself. In their town there was a provident medical society where medical relief could be obtained in times of sickness at as low a fee as 1½d. a week for a whole family, but there was an

entrance fee of 2s. 6d. The Guardians made a great effort to obtain the sanction of the Local Government Board to a scheme by which, where there was a prospect that the man would be able to pay the 1½d. a week, the Guardians might pay the entrance fee, but after a lot of correspondence the Local Government Board told them that they had no power to contribute in that way. With regard to the nursing question they were one of those Unions where the Guardians made a contribution to the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, and in consideration of that subscription of twenty guineas the nurses of that Institute attended their out-door cases. They had found that arrangement to work exceedingly well, and no doubt as their cases increased in number, so would their contribution increase to the Institute.

Mr SOUSLEY (Bradfield) said he did not see how it was possible in country districts to centralise the work of the medical officer. Supposing a district with an area of ten miles—how were the poor going to be properly treated in case of sickness? At Bradfield they had five medical officers who were paid a small salary, and so much in addition for each case they attended. In the first instance they granted their medical orders on loan. Some speakers had said that they ought not to try and get the money back from these poor people, but he dissented from that doctrine. (Hear, hear.) They wanted to make them understand their responsibility, and on giving them a medical order at a cost of 6s., which lasted for two months, as he said, they only gave them on loan. Each case was considered separately on its merits, and if they thought that the applicant could not afford to pay they cancelled the loan. With regard to nursing, he took it they were all agreed as to the necessity of providing proper trained nursing for the sick poor, but he did not think it could be done properly unless they had one nurse at the centre. In most of the parishes round him they had got parish nurses, or in other cases two or three parishes were grouped so that in cases of illness they had got a nurse in almost every parish. One speaker had said that they could pay into provident clubs for these paupers, but he failed to see that that was practicable, and he was pleased to hear the gentleman from Portsmouth say that the members of those societies would strongly object to such a plan.

The HON. SECRETARY said he had been asked by the Clerk to the Kensington Board of Guardians to say that they never made any attempt to get the money back for medical relief until the man was at work again. That, he thought, showed the advantage of the system of giving this relief on loan.

Mr LATHAM briefly replied on the discussion.

Sir W. CHANCE, in proposing a vote of thanks to the Chairman for presiding, said that Mr Wodehouse presided over their Conference last year, and he (Sir W. Chance) believed he would be expressing the unanimous opinion of the Delegates when he said that he trusted he would continue to preside over their deliberations. (Cheers.) There was a great advantage in having a permanent President for a

Conference of that kind. Sir John Hibbert had presided over the North-Western Conferences since they were established in 1875. Mr Wodehouse was considerably younger than Sir John Hibbert. (Laughter.) Sir John Hibbert at the present moment was eighty-two, and he was still going on, and he hoped that Mr Wodehouse, if he would not consent to be their permanent President, would at any rate go on for another year. (Cheers.)

Sir W. BOUSFIELD, in seconding the resolution, said the Conference had gained a great deal from having Mr Wodehouse as its President. He had a very wide experience over many years, and was really an expert in all Poor Law matters.

The vote was carried with enthusiasm.

The PRESIDENT, in reply, said he was quite sure the Conference would understand that he was not insensible to the kind words which had been spoken of him if he limited his observations to simply expressing his sincere thanks for the vote. With regard to the suggestion thrown out by Sir W. Chance, all he could say was that he would always be very pleased to do anything in his power to help these Conferences, but "sufficient unto the day were the responsibilities thereof." (Cheers and laughter.)

South Midland District.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

TWENTY-FOURTH ANNUAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE FOR
THE SOUTH MIDLAND DISTRICT, COMPRISING THE
COUNTIES OF BEDFORD, BUCKINGHAM, CAMBRIDGE,
HERTFORD, HUNTINGDON, MIDDLESEX, NORTH-
AMPTON, AND OXFORD, HELD IN THE GUILDHALL,
NORTHAMPTON, ON THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER
1906.

President — Mr Councillor JOHN BROWN.

Chairman, Northampton Board of Guardians.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference :—

BEDFORDSHIRE.

BEDFORD—

King, Charles (Chairman).
Grafton, Mrs.
Quenby, Thomas.

LEIGHTON BUZZARD—

Harvey, Rev. Treffry.
Roberts, H. M.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.

BUCKINGHAM—

Denchfield, F. W. (Chairman).
Hawes, Thomas.
Hearn, Thomas (Clerk).
Russell, Harold.
Verney, Sir Edmund, Bart.

MIDDLESEX.

BRENTFORD—

Bonnett, J. J.
Clark, Colonel Gerard.
Edwards, Mrs G. H.
Ellis, Miss.

EDMONTON—

Cole, E. G. (Vice-Chairman).
Jarvis, Rev. A.
Woodbridge, Mrs.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.

BRIXWORTH—

Bell, Wm.
Bury, Rev. Canon.
Calverley, Mrs.
Halford, Cheney.
James, G. T.
Smart, W. T.
Whiting, George.
Woodford, W. C. (Clerk).

DAVENTRY—

Eyre, James.
Major, Richard.

624 SOUTH MIDLAND DISTRICT CONFERENCE.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE—*continued.*

HARDINGSTONE—

Scriven, R. G. (Chairman).
Hughes, S.
Wake, Rev. A. J.

KETTERING—

Eady, J. S.
Gutteridge, Miss E.
Lane, C. W. (Clerk).

NORTHAMPTON—

Beasley, Rev. T. L.
Long, W. H.
Pearse, Mr Councillor.
Scott, Mrs R.
Scott, C. J.
Sykes, E. W.
Thompson, T. C., J.P.
Wright, Mr Councillor.
Fawkes, Wm. (Clerk).
Pratt, P. J. (Assistant Clerk).

OUNDL—

Jelley, Henry.

TOWCESTER—

Montgomery, Harry.

THRAPSTON—

Lee, Mrs.
Wilkinson, J. R.

WELLINGBOROUGH—

Ball, E. R.
Dunkley, C.
Linnett, T. W. C.

OXFORDSHIRE.

BANBURY—

Day, Mrs.
Maule, Mrs.

VISITORS.

E. D. Court, Local Government Board Inspector.
G. H. Edwards.
Alderman F. Tonsley.
A. F. Vulliamy.
G. W. Horton, Superintendent of Homes, Northampton.
Quick, G., Relieving Officer, Northampton.

The following Unions were not represented:—

BEDFORDSHIRE.—Amphill, Biggleswade, Luton.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE.—Amersham, Aylesbury, Eton, Newport Pagnell, Winslow, Wycombe.

CAMBRIDGESHIRE.—Cambridge, Caxton and Arrington, Chesterton, Ely, Linton, Newmarket, North Witchford, Whittlesey, Wisbech.

HERTFORDSHIRE.—St Albans, Barnet, Berkhamstead, Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hatfield, Hemel Hempstead, Hertford, Hitchin, Royston, Ware, Welwyn, Watford.

HUNTINGDONSHIRE.—Huntingdon, St Ives, St Neots.

MIDDLESEX.—Hendon, Staines, Uxbridge, Willesden.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE.—Brackley, Peterborough, Potterspury.

OXFORDSHIRE.—Bicester, Chipping Norton, Headington, Oxford, Thame, Witney, Woodstock.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED.

	PAGE
FIFTEEN YEARS OF POOR LAW REFORM IN DENMARK. <i>By</i> Mrs G. H. EDWARDS, <i>Guardian, Brentford Union</i> - -	627
REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY, 1906. <i>By</i> Mr A. F. VULLIAMY, <i>late Clerk to the Guardians,</i> <i>Ipswich</i> - - - - -	649

THURSDAY, 6TH DECEMBER.

The PRESIDENT, in opening the proceedings, said that he had perhaps gone outside his province a little, but he had invited Alderman F. Tonsley, the first Chairman of the Local Distress Committee, and an old Guardian, to be present at that meeting, and he was with them.

Colonel GERARD CLARK (Hon. Sec.) said that it had been usual to hold these meetings in a cycle of places. Six years ago the Conference was held at Northampton, then came Bedford, London, Oxford, Cambridge, and London, and now it was at Northampton again. According to the cycle it was Bedford's turn again next year, and they generally had a good Conference there.

It was unanimously resolved to hold the next meeting at Bedford.

The Hon. Sec. stated that the Members of the Committee of the Conference were as follows :—

Bedford—Mrs Grafton, 14 Cardington Road, Bedford ; *Bucks*—Sir Edmund Verney, Bart., Claydon House, Winslow, Bucks ; *Cambridge*—Mr A. J. Pell, Wilburton Manor, Ely ; *Hertford*—Mr Harford Green, Stansted, Essex ; *Huntingdon*—Rev. Thos. Hodgson, Eynesbury Vicarage, St Neots ; *Middlesex*—Mr E. G. Cole, The Potteries, Tottenham ; *Northampton*—Rev. Canon Bury, Harleston, Northampton ; *Oxford*—Mrs J. A. Gillett, North Newington House, Banbury. Mr Harford Green had not attended any of the meetings.

In reply to a question, Colonel Clark said that there were no Hertfordshire Guardians present at that Conference.

A GUARDIAN—It is rather difficult for them to attend.

The whole of the Members of the Committee were re-elected.

The HON. SECRETARY said that the retiring representatives of the district for the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences were Mr E. G. Cole, Rev. T. Hodgson, and himself (Colonel Clark). The Committee recommended that Mr Cole, Sir E. Verney, Bart., and himself should be appointed for the ensuing year. A proposition to this effect was unanimously adopted.

In acknowledging his unanimous re-election as Hon. Secretary—proposed by Mr E. G. Cole, who bore testimony to his valuable services—Colonel GERARD CLARK said he wished they could find somebody else to do the work, but he would be glad to undertake it again for another year, and do his best. (Hear, hear.)

Mr Councillor BROWN then delivered his presidential address, saying—It now falls to my lot to give a welcome to the ladies and gentlemen here to Northampton. Northampton is a town of which we Northamptonians are proud, as well as some who live outside its borders. I very much regret that our friend Canon Bury, or some able speaker, is not in the chair on this occasion—("No")—but I trust that we shall have a valuable and helpful Conference. The duties now imposed upon members of Guardians are many and varied. We are accused by many of being hard-hearted, and of not

being liberal enough to those who seek our assistance. In Northampton above all other towns during the last six years we have been very hardly hit by the introduction of machinery, which has displaced a large amount of labour, and which has caused a re-arrangement of work, and this has thrown very large and heavy duties upon Boards of Guardians in the district. Then, again, the amount of work which many members put in on the Assessment Committee is not known, I believe, to the outside public, or the members would receive greater credit than they do now. (Hear, hear.) The public also do not know what long and important sittings the Board have, often for three, or even four, hours, to deal with applications for relief, and a great deal of responsibility attaches to this work. Further, we have in this as in other districts a Visiting Committee to inspect the House and the hospitals; and then there are the Scattered Homes, which take up the time and attention of a considerable number of Guardians if the work is to be properly conducted and carried out, and if the children are to be brought up as a credit to the Guardians and with advantage to the general body of ratepayers. (Hear, hear.) The Royal Commission which is now sitting will, I trust, give to Boards of Guardians greater liberty in dealing with children. I often think it is a matter of regret in the case of so many children that the Guardians cannot do for them what would be the best for them. I am hoping that the Royal Commission will recommend that in English-speaking Colonies the Government will be asked to erect training homes where all children reaching the age of ten years, who have been under the charge of Guardians here for two years, will be taken and receive three or four years' training, and be brought up to a life which they can follow with great advantage to themselves and great relief to the labour market of this country. Between 20,000 and 30,000 children yearly are leaving the homes of Guardians in all parts of the country, and it would be a great advantage in every respect to send them to English-speaking Colonies. Then there is the question of the tramps which is to be considered this afternoon. There are very few people aware of the large number who pass through a town like this—many thousands, in addition to the people who seek shelter in our casual wards. I have not the exact figures by me for last year, but I know that they run into thousands. It is a common difficulty with every Board, a great and increasing difficulty, to know how to deal with the wives and children of men who temporarily desert them, either on a plea of looking for work or some other excuse. Then we have the question of the wives and children of people who go into gaol—what to do with them all is a great anxiety to a Board where the accommodation is somewhat limited. In Northampton the Board are adapting an old Workhouse to modern methods, and if you would any of you like to see what is being done, the master will be only too pleased to show you round. I have read with interest the paper of Mrs Edwards, and also the book on Poor Law Reform by Miss Sellers—"The Danish Poor

Relief System." The one point I should like to refer to in connection with this question is, whether it is not the general opinion in this country that none but elected bodies can properly deal with these subjects, whether the people would be willing, in fact, to hand over these duties to Commissioners. That is a matter upon which I should not like to express an opinion at the present moment, for you would have to prove satisfactorily that the Commissioners can do the work better than the Guardians. At the same time I quite admit that no Guardian can properly get an insight into the law like a man trained and brought up to that special subject. I hope that we shall have a pleasant and instructive discussion, and that everybody will go away the better for this Conference. (Applause.)

Mrs G. H. EDWARDS (Brentford) then read the following paper:—

FIFTEEN YEARS OF POOR LAW REFORM IN DENMARK.

BY MRS G. H. EDWARDS,

Guardian, Brentford Union.

BEFORE entering on the specific subject of this paper, I should like very briefly to recall to your minds the reasons why we, who in England to-day are at last seriously bestirring ourselves in the matter of the reform of our own Poor Law, should look to a small country like Denmark, in some respects unlike our own, in others very like, for guidance. I am taking for granted that every one here present is convinced that we do need such reform. It is hard to imagine that any one who has been engaged in Poor Law work in any large and increasing district, can fail to appreciate its urgency.

The struggle to confine within the rigid limits of the Poor Law the new spirit which is everywhere manifesting itself is, and must be, a failure. The anomalies which are constantly occurring in administration—the waste of public money and private time—the growing humanitarianism of our day, which by improving the condition of the poor within the gates, has so immeasurably added to the burdens of those

who are struggling for independence—the failure of the ruling and controlling authority to regulate or co-ordinate the action of the various bodies under its jurisdiction—the dissatisfaction of the ratepayer—the growing tendency to “come into the house” on the part of not only the old and worn-out, but the temporarily unemployed and the able-bodied—all these and many other signs are not wanting to show the social reformer that the time has come when the old Poor Law, which in its day was a great reforming agency and has even yet not lost all its powers for good, must give way to a system which is better fitted to the circumstances of to-day, which takes into account the complexity of the problems to be faced, and endeavours to gain from other countries lessons in the framing of a new and better law.

Fifteen years have now passed since in 1891 Denmark, which had up to then a Poor Law practically identical with our own, courageously faced the question of how to deal with destitution considered in the light of modern conditions, and to bring as much science as possible to bear on the subject. It is to the results of this legislation on the country as a whole, as evidenced by the most recent reports, that I propose to call your attention, feeling sure that whatever differences of working might be necessary in adopting some such scheme in our own country, the results would inevitably be the same, because the principles which underlie the reforms are thoroughly sound and practical.

The two laws which have worked such a far-reaching change in the condition of the Danish poor are respectively the “Poor Law Reform Bill” and the “Old Age Relief Bill.”

The first, whilst upholding the original principle of the old law that every destitute person has a right to relief, gives powers practically unlimited as to how, when, and where the relief shall be given. From

the moment a man finds himself on the Poor Law he loses all right to control his own movements. To quote Miss Sellars: "Of all the various powers the Danish Poor Law authorities possess, this power of detaining Workhouse inmates is the one undoubtedly to which they themselves attach most importance. They look upon it as by far the most valuable weapon they have with which to battle against pauperism. A Workhouse, they hold, loses all value either as a destitution test, an educational force, or a punishment, if those who resort there are free to betake themselves off the day the fancy seizes them."

There is no need to labour the moral of this reform to any one who has had experience of "ins-and-outs" under our own system.

Workhouses then are classified. Taking Copenhagen as the model, we find there—

1. The Alderdomshjem—an old age home for the State pensioner, who has never come under the Poor Law at all.

All who have seen these homes in Denmark agree that nothing could surpass them as models of a refuge for an honourable old age. About 500 pensioners occupy this home.

2. The second class of home for the aged and infirm "with a past" is the Almindelig.

This is neither a Workhouse nor an almshouse, but a hospital in the old-fashioned sense of a home and refuge. The house can accommodate 2,000 inmates, and here again classification is exercised—three or four grades being recognised. From this place all the quarrelsome, disreputable, and immoral are excluded; it is a refuge for the social failures who have not qualified as "old age pensioners."

3. There are two establishments in Copenhagen for the able-bodied.

The first, the St Johnner Stiftelse, containing from 300 to 600 inmates, who are also divided into three

grades, the two first having privileges not found in the third. In all of these the inducement is always to qualify for a higher grade. A man starts in the third, but he must work his way up, and that promptly, to the first. If after six weeks he is still in the third, he is sent to the Ladegaard, where the discipline is harder, but where he can still earn something for himself, as well as work for his keep. The full cost per head of the inmates, including administration, is 11½d. a day. In 1902, after all expenses were paid, the net profits of the Ladegaard workshops amounted to 70,000 kroner, or about £3,800.

4. Finally, for the professional vagrant and loafer there is the penal Workhouse, which is by the law of 1891 provided by every commune. One is generally the joint property of a whole district, and the cost of upkeep falls on the county as a whole. The cost is about 10d. a day. Life in these institutions closely resembles that in a prison; indeed, one wonders whether our own prisons are not in many ways less deterrent to criminals than these penal Workhouses to the vagrant class, which has practically disappeared from Denmark since their introduction. Aliens are also sent there, with excellent results.

Children are almost invariably boarded out.

This classification renders it possible to give to every one the sort of treatment he needs. For instance, it prevents the costly folly of forcing a man temporarily out of work to submit to the test of stonebreaking. In Denmark workshops of every kind are found in the Workhouses where a man may exercise his trade, and after the amount he has cost the community has been deducted, he can earn sufficient to start him on his way again. As Mr Carlile says: "Pauper relief is regarded in Denmark not as a gift but a loan, the recipient becoming a debtor to the community. The community must remit the debt if he can prove that there is no chance of his ever being able to pay it, but

until he does so he is disfranchised, and may not even marry without the consent of the local authorities.

It cannot be too emphatically repeated that any reform which leaves liberty of action to the man who by his own misconduct has brought himself or his family to destitution is practically useless, and it is just here that our present Workhouse system fails so completely. What is there in it to help the man who is seeking to regain the footing he may have lost? Is not the result of a prolonged stay in the House always that a man loses all desire, and in a great measure all power to work, and that being unable to earn money, and having no incentive to do so, and knowing that the law is bound to provide him with food and shelter, he sinks from the self-respecting, struggling worker to the idle, loafing, and mischievous parasite?

But as the subject of vagrants will no doubt be exhaustively discussed this afternoon, when the recently published Departmental Report is under consideration, I will only say that, by means of the penal Workhouse, land colonies, and careful systematic classification of Workhouses, this class has practically disappeared from Denmark, all of them being in some form or another made to work for their living.

Before coming to the all-important subject of cost it is necessary to discuss the second important reform of 1891, namely, the "Old Age Relief Law," for the working of the two is so inextricably bound up the one with the other that we cannot separate the consideration of their results. This law, passed in April 1891 and amended on 3rd May 1902, provides "Old Age Assistance" for all native-born subjects who, having completed their sixtieth year, are without the means of providing themselves or those dependent on them with the necessities of life.

The relief given is to be sufficient for the support of the person relieved and his family and for their treatment in case of sickness, but it may be given in

money or kind as circumstances require, or consist in free admission to a suitable asylum or other establishment intended for that purpose. The applicant must have had a fixed residence in the country for ten years, and during that period he must not have had any relief from the Poor Law other than sick relief, or have been found guilty of vagrancy or begging, or be known to have lived a life which in general opinion creates scandal, such as proved drunkenness, &c. On the first introduction of this law in 1891 there were not wanting prophets who predicted a general falling off in habits of thrift, and even national bankruptcy as the result of this new departure, and it is interesting to note how inevitably the same Jeremiah-like utterances follow any mention of old age pensions in England to-day. Seriously to discuss such a possibility has been in the eyes of some people to pass as a faddist, a dreamer of impossible dreams, or a Socialist bent on the destruction of his country; but the recent utterances of the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer have at once transferred the matter from the field of purely academic discussion to the sphere of practical politics. We shall therefore do well to ask in all seriousness what the probable effect on the country of such a change would be, particularly as to the influence it might have on thrift and wages.

In an article recently published in the *Spectator* on the manufacture of paupers, the following passage represents pretty accurately the attitude of many thoughtful persons towards the question. These are some of the effects which would, says the writer, follow any scheme of old age pensions:—

“Persons whose income is over the borderline of 10s. a week would be tempted to conceal the fact or even to assign away some of their means. Where an aged person was earning a little over the 10s. there would be a temptation alike to himself and to his employer to reduce his wages to qualify him

for the pension. The pension would enable an able-bodied old man to underbid his competitors in the labour market.

"The like would happen with regard to the contributions of children towards the support of aged persons. The donations of charitable people would be diverted to purposes tending to qualify the recipients for the State pension. The net result of all these considerations is that a scheme of State pensions would induce people to neglect making adequate provision for old age without giving them the certainty of obtaining the pension at the time when it would be required. This is not all. The economic effect of a system of pensions would be to lower wages. Thus the working-man who agitates for a pension does so in the interest of his employer, not his own."

Now let us see how far these Cassandra-like prophecies have been fulfilled in the case of the countries who have embarked on this perilous enterprise. We find that in Denmark in December 1903, 47,579 old age pensions were in existence. Of the recipients 14,467 were heads of families, representing in addition some 17,218 persons dependent on them, and 33,052 were single persons, making in all 64,737 persons, supported altogether or in part from old age pensions. The average old age pension for Copenhagen in 1903 was ten guineas, but the grant in rural districts being less, the average grant for the year for all Denmark was £7. 17s. 10d. per head. By a law passed in 1902, persons having an income not exceeding 200 kroner (about £11) became entitled to the pension, while the receipt of sick relief was held not to be a disqualification.

The total cost of old age pensions for 1903 was £369,000. A saving in poor relief of nearly £100,000 should be deducted from this sum, though it is undoubtedly the case that many of those who enjoy the old age pension are of a class that would rather suffer

than apply for poor relief. Out of the £270,000 left the State paid £135,000, that is somewhat over one-fortieth of a budget of $4\frac{1}{2}$ millions. The cost of pensions for 1904 was £399,777, and for 1905 the amount spent was £399,640.

Of the 47,519 old age pensioners it was found that nearly all were living with relatives or friends; those provided for in old age homes being of:—Heads of families, 119; single men, 523; single women, 756.

It may be of interest to note here the relative percentages of those receiving old age pensions. These were of—

Men at an age from 60 to 65	-	-	7.3 per cent.
Women " " 60 " 65	-	-	19.0 "
Men " " 65 " 70	-	-	18.5 "
Women " " 65 " 70	-	-	31.5 "
Men " above 70	-	-	28.7 "
Women " " 70	-	-	36.5 "

Of the total population over sixty years of age, 23.9 per cent. were in receipt of pensions.

The total number of persons in receipt of poor relief in 1903 was 49,782, of whom only 13,469 were over sixty years of age.

The latest report from Burgomaster Jensen states that the saving in Poor Relief caused by old age pensions is increasing every year.

In the absence of further data it is difficult to justify or to combat the statement that the economic effect of old age pensions must be to lower wages. As a matter of fact, however, wages in Denmark have increased by some 50 per cent. during the last twenty years. To what extent this is due to the increased cost of living, to the efforts of the splendidly organised labour unions, or to other causes, is not at present manifest; but expert opinion in Denmark inclines to the belief that old age pensions have really not affected wages at all.

Temperance is making great advances, and the

wealth of Denmark per individual now surpasses that of Great Britain. With regard to thrift an important fact to be noticed is that certain societies which formerly devoted themselves to old age pensions specially have undoubtedly suffered; but as the insurance and savings bank reports testify to a steady increase, it can only be inferred that the worker still strains every nerve to qualify for an old age pension at sixty rather than strive for what is in most cases impossible—the putting by of a sum sufficient to maintain him after that age, but that he is disposed to find other channels for his small investments. It is necessary to remember that the old age pension is not intended to be a maintenance, but only an assistance. There is therefore the strongest inducement to the always thrifty and industrious Dane to make such supplementary provision as he can against the day when he can no longer work. Unhappily the responsible heads of our own Department refuse to consider anything but a universal scheme, thereby losing what is the essential good of the Danish system—namely, the principle of discrimination, which is one of the strongest possible inducements to thrift and good conduct. While theoretically there is much to be said for a universal system as an ideal for the future, we have to deal with human nature as it is, and also with an Exchequer which is by no means inexhaustible.

But it is, above all, in the matter of administration that we have much to learn from our neighbour. Not only does the net cost of old age pensions and Poor Relief combined come out at 2s. 2½d. per head of the population *less* than pauper relief in England and Wales, but the cost of administration of relief in 1891 in Copenhagen was only 15 per cent. of the expenditure of the relief itself, and this though it was entirely in the hands of paid officials.

Here we come face to face with the question—

and large and small populations, are alike adopting systems of old age pensions, it is idle for us to dismiss the idea as altogether visionary and impracticable for ourselves.

I can imagine nothing more disastrous than to graft a system of old age pensions on to our present Poor Law—that would indeed be, as Sir William Chance has said, to make our last state worse than the first—but I believe that when the much needed reforms have been brought about—when a settled policy shall have replaced the present disastrous laxity of administration—when it shall no longer be in the power of an able-bodied member of the community to live himself and have all his family brought up at the expense of the State, that then we, as well as our neighbours, shall find that the much dreaded cost of providing for our deserving workers will prove a light burden indeed compared with the present cost of manufacturing paupers. For it is impossible to ignore the fact that the differentiation of old age pensions from Poor Relief, as practised in Denmark and elsewhere, has done much to restore that dread and distaste of the Workhouse which is fast disappearing amongst us. Nothing which weakens self-respect or checks the impulse of the individual to live as a free member of the community is worth doing at any price, but we have seriously to consider whether we are not guilty of this ourselves in our present dealings with our poor.

In conclusion I wish to express my indebtedness to Dr Jon Stefansson and Mr C. H. Finch, of Copenhagen, for much valuable information as to statistics, to Miss Sellar's book on the Danish Poor Relief System, and to Mr Carlile's recent work on the Continental Outcast.

DISCUSSION.

Sir EDMUND VERNEY said he thought the idea of discussion was that there should be dissent, and from that point of view it would be very difficult to get up an active discussion that morning. They must all feel very much indebted to Mrs Edwards for the great trouble she had taken in preparing such interesting information for them, and there was certainly a great deal to be learnt from the paper. He had been a reformer in small things, or in great, for a good many years, and he had invariably found that the line English people took with respect to any sort of reform was this: First, they said, "Has it been tried anywhere? Is it a new idea?" Anybody who was green and not up to this line of argument, would probably answer, "Yes; it has been tried at such and such a place." Then came the reply, "Oh, but they are quite a different class of people to us. It might answer there, but it would not here." He did not think that they could find any country more encouraging as a model for reform than Denmark, because it was so like England in many ways, and where it differed, the difference was for the worse and not for the better. It had a worse climate and a poorer population, and he considered that any experiment or reform that had succeeded there ought to be very favourably considered in England. Denmark, however, had one or two advantages, and one was that the Danes were willing to conform to any scheme of co-operation—this was distasteful to most people in England. Also the Danes cherished genius, which in the rural districts in England was perfectly hateful to the average inhabitant. (Laughter.) These were two points where they had the advantage over us. Then, again, the Danes were practically one race of people, whereas we in this country suffered very much indeed, because we had such a great number of different races of people. For instance, a Scotchman was quite different to a Welshman, and a Welshman differed very much from people living in this part of the country. Consequently, proposals which would commend themselves to one race of the English people were very much disliked and opposed by another race of the English people. He believed thoroughly that any scheme of old age pensions would mean the lowering of wages. He did not know, however, that this would be any great harm, for wages would be sure to recover themselves. When he had the honour of being a member of the first London County Council they had to take over the business of the old iniquitous Board of Works. One of the first things they settled was that they would have no more pensions for anybody—for the clerks or officials. What was the immediate result? The clerks and officials said, "Oh, we must have higher wages." The reverse obviously held true, and if pensions were given the tendency must obviously be to lower wages. He did not think that this was a sufficient objection to the scheme, but it was a matter, at any rate, that must be faced. Wages were not likely to be lowered to any appreciable extent, and he did not think

we could do better than broadly accept the Danish scheme as the most suitable foundation upon which to build up a scheme of old age pensions in this country. (Applause.)

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY (Northampton) said he had not had the experience of some of them in dealing with Poor Law, though he had been a member of the Northampton Board for some years. He hoped, however, he had taken an intelligent interest in all these questions, and he had read and studied with interest the very valuable paper which Mrs Edwards had contributed to the Conference. His own general impression was that reform on the basis of the Denmark system was a little too drastic for this country. What he felt very strongly was that it went too far in the direction of taking away liberty. Every one must admit that to take away a man or a woman's liberty because they had fallen, would be very strong ground for people resisting the tendency to come under the Poor Law at all. Whatever might be the motives which would help men to keep away from the Workhouse there would always be a large number who would ultimately come to this condition, and that being so, he thought it was their duty to mingle a little mercy and kindness with the judgment which they exercised in dealing with such cases. He would not like to see as the principle adopted in any great reform of the Poor Law, the taking away of any person's liberty, and he rather gathered that that would be the case if they adopted the Danish system. He was rather startled when he found, amongst other conditions imposed in that country, that a man might not marry unless the persons in authority gave him permission. That was a restriction which he felt very deeply. He was an old married man himself with a large family. Some people thought this a disgrace; he considered it to be an honour—(hear, hear)—and he did think it would be very sad if through some act of folly—he had been guilty of many himself—a man should be shut out for all time from reaching a condition which he looked upon as the climax of human happiness. (Hear, hear.) He took a good deal of interest in the matter of the children, and when he became a Poor Law Guardian the second time, that question of taking them out of the control of their parents was prominently before the Board. His first and strong impulse was that it was desirable to exercise the powers which the Guardians possessed to the smallest extent possible. It seemed to him a most serious thing to say to any parent, "You shall have no control over your children who are under our care for a time." In the interests of the children, however, he was sure that that very often was the best thing the Guardians could do, and when he came to see the sort of people they had to deal with—the disgraceful fathers, the almost more disgraceful mothers—it was seldom he did not say "Yes," when the question arose, "Shall we adopt these children until they are eighteen years of age?" With all his love of liberty, and he was sure they were all very much alike in this respect, he was still in favour of holding a very tight hand upon the children. (Hear, hear.)

Miss ELLIS (Brentford) asked if they could consider the present method of dealing with the poor going into the Workhouse as kind? She referred to those with young children. Personally, she thought it was most unkind, for what chance had a man of getting out and getting a home together again? By the Danish method he was allowed to work, to move from one grade up to another, and to save a little money. Eventually he would get out and make a home for himself. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY said he was aware that the paper did state that in Denmark a man was allowed to earn for himself with a hope of getting out. What he was speaking about, however, was the general principal distinctly stated at the commencement of the paper, that the taking away of a man's liberty formed the basis of dealing with the poor.

The PRESIDENT said there were one or two items in the paper which were open to a good deal of discussion; one being the question raised by Sir Edmund Verney, that the tendency of pensions would be to reduce wages. Another was that under the Danish scheme applicants must not have had any relief from the Poor Law, other than sick relief, for a period of ten years.

Mr E. G. COLE (Edmonton; Member of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences) thanked Mrs Edwards for her splendid paper. In his opinion it touched the spot absolutely, and if Guardians would administer the present old laws on the lines of that paper they would not have half the troubles they had to-day. (Hear, hear.) He was rather surprised that his friend, the vicar, was so very much concerned about the liberty of the tramp.

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY—I was not speaking of tramps.

Mr COLE (continuing) said the fundamental principle of that restriction of liberty was that the man who was a wastrel should not be allowed to roam about the country as he liked. Did the man who shot a partridge lose his liberty? Of course he did.

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY—How long?

Mr COLE—Well, the chances are that if there are one or two reverend gentlemen on the bench he gets six months. (Laughter.) Surely the man who had brought children into the world and was too lazy to work to keep them, was a worse criminal than that man? (Applause.) The father of a family who was able to work but refused to do so, was a common enemy—(hear, hear)—and ought to be put in a penal colony. We were too sentimental to these men. Where there was firm administration and the men found that it did not pay them to loaf they went to work. They were well able to work, and really to treat them in this sentimental fashion was simply to encourage pauperism. He believed that our amateur Guardians had been responsible for the manufacture of tens of thousands of paupers. (Hear, hear.) It was only necessary to look at Poplar. He had spoken about Poplar at Conferences for years; he knew quite well what they were doing when they were doing it. Poor Law was not a

matter for amateurs to practise their cranks upon ; it required common-sense administration, and bad as our Poor Law was, if Guardians administered it on common-sense lines they would not go far wrong. (Hear, hear.) As to the boarding out of children, the best boarding out they could have was to be boarded out with their own mothers if they were respectable women. (Hear, hear.)

A GUARDIAN—If they are.

Mr COLE—Yes, if they are. Boards of Guardians would give a mother between 5s. and 7s. to keep her five children upon ; they would give a stranger 25s. or 30s. This was absolutely true, and it was done all over the country ; and then people wondered that the mother did not keep strong. They never gave her a chance. He had tried to induce his own Board to give a mother 2s. per child when she was a respectable woman, but they would not do it. They would send a mother and her children into the House, the family costing £3 or £4, and think they were doing right, but they would not give a mother 10s. a week to keep her five children. The reason the people of Denmark were a long way before us in this matter was because they were administering on common-sense lines. He looked upon the recent interview with the Prime Minister and the Chancellor of the Exchequer in very much the same light as the celebrated Order which was issued a few years ago, when they were advised to scatter out-relief with a free hand. He recollected a gentleman coming down to his Board and giving him a wiggling because he had been too liberal with out-relief. A few weeks after the celebrated Order came out, and when the Colonel called again he (Mr Cole) said, "I am pleased to see you, and no doubt you have come to apologise for what you said recently." (Laughter.) The proposal now was to give every one—good, bad, and indifferent—an old age pension ; a man who had been a wastrel the whole of his life and done nothing at all was to have the same money as the man who had always tried to keep his family respectable. It was absurd ; it would not work. (Hear, hear.) Boards of Guardians everywhere should make their views felt, and let their representatives in Parliament know that such a scheme would not work. This country ought to follow the lines adopted by Denmark and Switzerland, and if they dealt with the tramp, the man who would not work, on firm lines, they might be able to get rid of him altogether. (Hear, hear.)

Mr ROBERTS (Leighton Buzzard) said he could not too strongly express his opinion that they should deal in the most drastic way with all vagrants. They were the noxious weeds of society.

The PRESIDENT—This question is really open for discussion this afternoon.

Rev A. JARVIS (Edmonton) said there seemed to him to be two ideas before people to-day—the one was that the individual should be considered everything in the matter ; and the other, that the State should be considered everything in the matter. The individual came in for a very big share in such places as Poplar, and the question was,

"What is to be done so as to keep the level of the nation up?" That had been the whole point in the growth of Poor Law administration—the protection of the nation, and the way in which people had approached this question had been very varied. Mr Jarvis went on to express the opinion that the matter of boarding out children was one that required seriously looking into. A sum of 4s. was paid to a woman to take somebody else's child, and that woman had to make a profit out of her. It was no use trying to get away from the fact—it was a commercial transaction. (Hear, hear.) Personally, he thought they would find that the solution of this question of the children was not so much a matter of boarding out (as in Denmark) as of going in for smaller schools. As to the subject of old age pensions nothing very definite had yet been stated, but they had had a suggestion thrown out which had filled the minds of a great many people with the gravest feelings. The principle of universal pensions was a different one to that which was actuating any country at the present time. (Hear, hear.) It was a totally new principle in English administration, and it was very different indeed from the work that was now going on in Denmark. There were no universal pensions there; they would not dream of giving them. Though a considerable section of the aged poor in Denmark, some 23 per cent., received a pension it carried with it a surrender of the personal rights of the individual, but there was no suggestion of any such surrender of rights in this country. The idea was that everybody should have a right to receive a pension because he was an English-born subject. That might work out for the immediate benefit of the individual during the few years he would live, but would it work out for the benefit of the nation as a whole? The principle which actuated this suggestion of the Government was different to that which had actuated Guardians in their administration of the Poor Law from time immemorial. They had always considered that a person who received State aid should be an applicant for such aid, but that was a principle which was now to be departed from. The question of character had always been one which had weighed considerably with the Guardians, and the applicant, of course, must be without means of subsistence. The new principle was a very different one. It had been said that it would become an honour to receive a pension. He begged leave to differ very considerably on that point. (Hear, hear.) To-day relief could be given to a person—and it was certainly not considered an honour. Would it work out that it would be considered an honour by a pensioner in the future to receive State-aid? He thought it was very questionable whether it would. He doubted whether anybody would consider it a great honour to receive a pension of 5s. a week—if they were given £5,000 a year they might think so—(laughter)—but then it would be for services rendered. Personally, he would like to see every one look upon State aid in the light of a regrettable necessity, and nothing more. (Hear, hear.) In the past everything possible had been done to encourage independ-

ence, and this new suggestion of the Government would mean encouraging dependence on all hands. The reader of the paper deprecated the cry of Socialism, but this principle was Socialism. It was impossible to blink the fact. Socialism might be right or wrong—it was not likely to come in our time as a great governing policy—but whether it was right or wrong the principle of pensions advocated by the Government was certainly Socialism. They must not shut their eyes to the fact that this was the first great national step towards the economic organisation of the individual by the State. If they were to give everybody pensions they would in time move on towards organising the whole of the people from the point of view of the State. (Hear, hear.)

Mr R. G. SCRIVEN (Hardingstone) said he would like to say something in answer to the last speaker on the subject of national old age pensions. He always been strongly in favour of a universal old age pension for more reasons than one. The proposal was not a new one, though it might be a new thing for it to be brought forward by a responsible Minister. It was introduced, he believed, by Mr Charles Booth, a great authority on these matters, and Mr Booth's arguments appeared to him to be quite unanswerable. It was all very well to talk about Socialism and that sort of thing, but we did give old age pensions now to a considerable part of the population, but not to those who really deserved them most. (Hear, hear.) We gave them to those who really deserved them least, to those who had done nothing in any way to make themselves independent or make provision for old age. Take two men side by side. One was a drunkard and spendthrift. He got through his money and reached the age of sixty or sixty-five, when he applied to the Guardians and got his 3s. or 4s. a week. His neighbour had been careful and thrifty, and had saved a little, but as long as that little lasted he could not have a penny from any one. He was penalised really by the fact that instead of being extravagant he had been careful. This ought not to be; a man who had saved a little ought to be equally the recipient of a pension when he reached the age of sixty-five as the man who had spent every penny. There arose the question of limits, "Where are you going to stop?" There were limits in other countries; but he quite agreed with the remark that when those limits were approached all sorts of difficulties arose. It would be very difficult at times to ascertain whether a man should be included or not. There were a vast number of people in this country, people delicately brought up, to whom 10s. a week would not be a competence, but an addition to their income of £10 a year would be a great help and benefit. He could not see himself that they could exclude some from the benefit, or draw the line anywhere with safety, excepting, of course, that the pension should be given on personal application, and should be paid personally at some local post-office or other place. That would naturally shut out people who were so well off that they would not take the trouble to apply for the 5s. ;

but beyond these he thought it should be given to every one. He could not see that anything of this kind would be a hindrance to thrift; it would, in fact, be an incentive to thrift, for it would induce a man to save something in order that his income might be larger than the 5s. a week he would receive. Another way in which it would be an enormous help would be to the benefit societies. These societies being relieved of the charge of their old members at the age of sixty or sixty-five would be able to do a great deal more for members up to that age; they would be able to provide more for sickness and to keep men off the rates until they reached the age for a pension. The heavy burden upon the benefit societies of the aged members prevented them now from doing all they might do for the younger members. Of course there was the question of finance, and that was a large one, but he did not think it was altogether an impossible one. The rates would be relieved immensely by taking off them the burden of those who receive out-relief and indoor relief, and there were about £9,000,000 of grants in aid of the rates which might be at once diverted to the commencement of a fund for old age pensions. At any rate the difficulty was not unsurmountable; it was not as if they were taking the money out of the country altogether. It was merely a transfer from people who had got it to people who wanted it, who were, in fact, being kept in one way or another at the present time at the expense of the nation.

Mr E. G. COLE—May I ask the last speaker whether his Board grants out-relief to a drunkard? Is that so?

Mr SCRIVEN—No, I don't think it is.

Mr COLE—That I think is what you said.

Sir EDMUND VERNEY—I fancy it is not so very unusual. (Laughter.)

Mr T. QUENBY (Bedford) said that relief was given to the most unthrifty people. The boarding-out of the children in his district answered remarkably well, but he thought it a very great shame that widows with four or five children should only have 6s. a week.

Another Guardian stated that recently his Board increased a widow's allowance from 6s. to 7s. 6d.

Colonel CLARK—How many children were there?

The GUARDIAN—Five.

Mr QUENBY said that that, he believed, was what his Board gave—1s. 6d. per child. It seemed to him, however, that it was not enough. Especially when some of the children had to be sent to school.

Mr E. G. COLE thought it was more humane to board children with their own mother, if she was a respectable woman, than elsewhere; and why Boards of Guardians should stick to 1s. or 1s. 6d. when they would spend 10s. or 15s. on a child in a school, passed his comprehension.

Mr T. HEARNE (Buckingham) asked whether there was any

system of outdoor relief in Denmark. He gathered from the paper that the system was that of the Workhouse and old-age pensions.

Mr E. D. COURT (Local Government Board Inspector) explained that the scale of payment a Board might make to a mother supporting her children rested with the Guardians, and he did not think they need be afraid that any reasonable amount would be objected to by the Local Government Board. When he read Mrs Edwards's paper he was terrified by it; and he believed his feeling was shared by most of the members of the Conference. It struck him that very few of the speeches had been strictly relevant to the paper, and there were one or two points he would certainly like to refer to. One of the best features of the Danish system had been that the men were able to support themselves and save a little, but there seemed little hope of that happening—despite the similarity of the races—in this country. The whole difficulty of the labour colonies and everything of that sort had been to find a market. If this could be done, of course, all the difficulties connected with dealing with the unemployed would disappear. (Hear, hear.) He was not surprised that Mr Beasley objected to the Danish clause which prevented a man from entering upon matrimonial engagements. He thoroughly agreed with him, and he did not believe that the people of this country would permit anything of that kind. As to the pension of 5s. a week, he did not see much objection to the scheme so long as it was universally given. There would be no honour, but there would be no disgrace.

Rev. A. JARVIS—Do you think everybody will take a pension?

Mr COURT—If not, so much the better.

Mr THOS. HAWES (Buckingham) said that a national system of old age pensions meant, of course, that one and all would be entitled to a pension at the age decided upon. The Government had very rightly given their attention to this matter, and the time had very nearly arrived when such a system would be enforced in this country. Several remarks had been made about the wastrel. Who had the money from the poor rate now? Was it the ordinary working individual who was doing the best he could for himself and his family? No, it was the wastrel. It was impossible to get away from the fact. Take two cases. One man worked hard, and brought up a family on 14s. or 15s. a week. Was it possible for him to save anything? No. He was ignored by Boards of Guardians so long as he kept himself fairly respectable. The other man was a drunkard, a wastrel, first in the Workhouse and then in gaol. When he got beyond work he must get a place in the House as an inmate, and so cost them on the average about 7s. a week. Would it not be better to give him 5s. a week, and close the Workhouses—to say nothing of giving this pension to the man who had worked all his life and was respectable?

Mr COLE—He would very likely get drunk.

Mr HAWES—He has done that all his life.

Mr COLE—He would spend the money on the Saturday, and go into the Workhouse again.

Mr HAWES—We should do away with the Workhouses. At any rate we should give him enough to maintain himself outside. He knew of a little village where there were ten almshouses, and each person received about 3s. 6d. a week, with the house and garden. He never knew one of those people to apply for relief in any way. If every man had 5s. a week as a pension there would be no need, he believed, to trouble any more about them. How any man could object to a universal system of old age pensions he could not understand.

Colonel CLARK said that Mr Court had spoken of the great difficulty of providing work in labour colonies. There was, no doubt, a difficulty, but they seemed to be able to manage it in Denmark. In our Workhouses the work performed by the people was practically valueless. For instance, they broke stones. Was it impossible to find work for them that would bring in money?

Mr COURT—Where is the market to be found?

Colonel CLARK pointed out that we had to buy from the foreigner now. Why could we not do the work ourselves? There was a market to be found for a great many things, but we were so desperately afraid of interfering with outside labour. The Government might be able surely to turn the work of these people to some good use; other countries could.

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY said that perhaps they worked better abroad. In an ordinary labour colony here it was found quite impossible to get anything like value for his money out of a man.

Colonel CLARK—I don't say that the work would pay, but better results might be achieved than at present.

Mr COLE—We put our men to profitable work.

Colonel CLARK—What is the work?

Mr COLE—A large amount of farm work, painting, white-washing, wood-chopping, and all that sort of thing. They had at Edmonton, however, only about a dozen able-bodied men. The Workhouse was the place for the sick or infirm; it should not be made comfortable for the able-bodied.

Mrs EDWARDS, replying to the discussion, said that most of those who had spoken had really not discussed her paper at all, but had referred to old age pensions as foreshadowed by Mr Burns and the Government. Mr Burns, discussing the matter not long ago, delivered himself most fully on the subject, and told them—a point she had tried to emphasise—that he was for doing away with the principle of discrimination. This, she considered, would be fatal to any scheme Mr Burns was committed by his own words in Parliament to a universal scheme without discrimination. Her paper was not one on old age pensions—it was intended to show them what had been done in another country for the past fifteen years, and to try to draw some lessons from that work. Denmark had no such system of pensions

as had been foreshadowed by the Government here ; it had a limited scheme, and gave only to those whose character would bear investigation. If there was to be no examination, then she would say, "Don't give an old age pension at all." Mr Court had said that he was terrified at the paper ; well, she was sorry for it. She was terrified herself at the scheme which the authorities now proposed. Her idea had simply been to point out the very obvious reforms which had worked so much to the advantage of the people of Denmark. Mr Beasley had said that she was for taking away liberty. Well, if they were to cure pauperism they must go deep ; and whatever might be thought of the drastic methods of Denmark, at all events they had done the deed there. (Hear, hear.) There was no excuse for England to sit meekly still and say, "What are we to do ?" We spend millions every year, and with what result ? We would not look to those who had tried and succeeded, and follow their advice. She remembered when this subject was before a previous Conference, mentioning Miss Seller's books on Poor Law Reform. She was pooh-poohed so much that she went home determined to look into the matter, and the result was the paper she had now read. Mr Beasley had criticised the restriction as to marriage. Well, we need not adopt that in this country if we did not wish to. Mr Cole thought our present Poor Law system might be satisfactory if administered rightly. But we must first of all know what our present system was, and that was a difficult question to decide. The Poor Law could not be similarly administered in every district in the country, and it would be impossible for us simply to reform the Poor Law on the lines of Denmark. The State pension left a person absolute liberty in Denmark, he had the franchise, and it was significant that in the first year of the new law hundreds of people claimed it, but did not get it. In the second year many less persons claimed ; and to-day very few people ask for the pension who did not get it, the conditions being so well known. As she was not there to advocate a universal scheme of old age pensions, she did not think she need answer any of the arguments upon that point, and she had purposely left out any large reference to the children, because on that question we had a great deal to teach Denmark. It was universally agreed by those who had seen the best of our schools and systems that we were far ahead of Denmark in that respect, and that the results achieved were better. As a matter of fact, the Danes simply boarded out children as well as they could, and sent travelling inspectors round to see them. In regard to the labour colonies, surely the great point was not whether they could be made self-supporting, but whether they could do the work which our present Workhouse system apparently could not do ? If the colonies could be made to pay elsewhere, of course, it was our duty to learn the way to do it ; other countries succeeded. Labour colonies probably did not do much in the way of reform, even the best of them, but they took away a class of men who were forming a considerable danger in our large districts. (Hear, hear.)

At the opening of the afternoon meeting, Mr E. G. COLE said, that at the meeting of the Central Committee a month ago a resolution was passed recommending representatives at the Poor Law Conferences to urge upon their Boards the necessity of purchasing copies of the reports from Messrs P. S. King & Son, Orchard House, Westminster. It would be to the advantage of all Boards to have full reports of the papers and speeches, and Boards were empowered to purchase them.

The PRESIDENT said it had been the custom of the Northampton Board to supply all members with a copy of the Annual Conference, held in London.

Colonel CLARK said at Brentford the reports were always ordered—both Central and that of the district—and a good deal of interest was taken in them.

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY (Ipswich) then read the following paper :—

REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON VAGRANCY.

BY MR A. F. VULLIAMY,

Late Clerk to the Guardians, Ipswich.

IN dealing with this important and voluminous Report, I have thought it best to confine myself to such portion of it as affects the duties of Boards of Guardians and their officers, leaving out, consequently, a considerable portion thereof.

The Report deals with two classes of paupers, namely, the wayfarers, who, being out of employment and without funds, have to seek the casual ward for rest and refreshment on their journey to some place where they expect to get work,—and the vagrant, who being work-shy, is satisfied with this rest and refreshment, and what he can obtain by begging, as a means of livelihood, and, wandering about from one casual ward to another, spends his life in absolute idleness.

Various endeavours have been made to distinguish between the two classes, as is pointed out in the Report, but they have in great measure failed because of the apparent impossibility of getting all Boards of

Guardians to combine in the effort, and the consequent incomplete result thereof.

Absolute uniformity of treatment, however, being essential for successful dealing with tramps, the Vagrancy Committee recommend that the wards should cease to be under the management of Boards of Guardians, and should be placed under police authority. That appears to me to be a wise course, and an important part of any successful scheme.

At present vagrant wards exist in connection with nearly every Workhouse, and, while some Workhouses of large and populous Unions which are off the main roads, and are strictly administered, are comparatively free from tramps, Boards of Guardians of other smaller Unions, which are on the main road, find the dealing with tramps one of their great difficulties.

Boards of Guardians exist for dealing with pauperism *within* their district, and a tramp does not come properly within the category. Tramps must be looked upon as national paupers, and should be dealt with at the cost of the nation and by some national system, and not at the cost of Boards of Guardians, and under differing plans according to the feelings and experience of varying Boards of Guardians.

In order to carry out this plan in the most economical and fairest way, the Committee recommend that the existing buildings, where required, be rented or purchased by the police authority ; that superfluous wards be discontinued ; that, where practicable, existing officers of wards be continued in office ; and that, where wards adjoin or form part of the Workhouse, arrangements be made with the Guardians for the supply of stores, heating, &c.

With all of this part of their proposals I entirely agree. They seem to me to be framed with due attention both to efficiency and economy.

They also recommend, and I think rightly, that

there should be a diet, which, while it is adequate, is of such a character that it will not induce any one to make use of the casual ward who could possibly avoid it.

They also recommend, and on the whole perhaps wisely, that a piece of bread and cheese should be given to the wayfarer to be used by him for a mid-day meal.

They also recommend that a task of work be enforced, and, in connection with that, they point out, and truly, that both oakum picking and stone breaking are unsatisfactory tasks of work. As they say, "A task of stone breaking or oakum picking, which would be impossible for the beginner, is mere child's play to the sturdy vagrant who has served a long apprenticeship in jails and Workhouses. Moreover, the quality of the oakum varies, and so does the hardness of the stones ; and it is more difficult to break a hundredweight of hard granite than a ton of sandstone. Flints and boulders present very varying degrees of hardness."

Corn grinding and stone pounding are much more satisfactory tasks of work, inasmuch as all men are on an equality.

There is no doubt but that if the whole system of vagrancy wards were dealt with by the police, the number of wards would be very much diminished, and the distance which a tramp would have to go would very often be considerably increased, so that he would have to make a fair day's journey in every case, instead of finding a vagrant ward every few miles, as is now too often the case.

Supposing tramps' wards, therefore, to be placed under the police, there comes the question of the prevention of the abuse of them.

It must be borne in mind that casual wards were started to enable the honest workman falling out of work in one part of the country, owing to slackness of employment there, and being penniless, to go to some

other part of the country where work might be plentiful, and where he might find employment; and this, and no other, is the legitimate use of these wards. In so far as they help to increase and perpetuate a class of men who live by means of them without work, they are productive of evil.

There is no longer the same need for them that there was when they were originally started, owing to the existence of trades unions, which provide their members with travelling money, and the comparative cheapness of railway travel.

Still, there are a certain number of working men who cannot afford railway travel, and who do not belong to trades unions, and for them it is right that provision should be made. Owing, however, to the fact that there is no present means of distinguishing the wayfarer from the vagrant, indiscriminate charity, which in this country is productive of much evil, is encouraged. This would be lessened if, when the person applies for charity, the person to whom he applies could ask for some means by which the individual could show that he was honestly in search of work.

The Committee, therefore, recommend—and it is a recommendation which almost all persons who have studied the subject at all would heartily endorse, and which is justified by experience in other countries—that the police, whenever a man starts off on his journey in search of work, should give him a way-ticket, mentioning his ultimate destination, and marking the next place he has to go to, to get to it. On presentation of that ticket, he would be admitted to the casual ward, and his ticket would then have marked upon it the next place to which he would have to go. He would have to do a certain amount of work in payment of his board and lodging, and, as soon as this was done, he would be free to continue his journey.

They also recommend that the ticket should be

available only for a month, and that the police should have power to alter the place of destination, and, consequently, the route, if they should find it expedient ; for a man might start in search of work in a particular place, and the police might either know that work was not required there, or that it was required in some nearer place, and the man might prefer to go to such place.

With a view to helping the honest wayfarer, it is recommended that a system should be adopted by which the conditions of work in all large places might be supplied to a central Board, who should furnish to the police authorities such particulars as might be useful in their respective districts.

All this is well designed, and would be productive of much benefit.

It would be well that the information above mentioned should be available, not only for workmen in casual wards, but for any other workmen in search of work ; and it would be an excellent thing if, outside every principal police station in all large towns, there were a notice put up mentioning where workmen were required, and the description of work.

Who, however, is a "wayfarer," for whom such provision is to be made? The Committee answer this question as follows :—

"We think that the police should be empowered to issue a way-ticket to a man who can satisfy them either that he has worked at some employment (other than a casual job) within a recent period, say three months, and that he has reasonable ground for expecting to get work at a certain place, and that he is likely to keep to it, or that he has some other good ground for desiring to go to some particular place. A case that might be dealt with under the latter description is the sailor who has missed his ship, and wishes to get to some other port."

In considering this recommendation, it is necessary

to consider what I would call the genesis of a tramp—how a man becomes one? I think that there is abundant evidence of the truth of the statement made by the Vagrancy Committee, that there is nothing to show that the often repeated statement, that tramps breed tramps, has much foundation in fact.

The number of women and children in the tramps' wards is very small indeed, in comparison with the number of adult men, and some other reason than the breeding by tramps of tramps must be sought for the maintenance, and on the whole, increase of tramps in the country.

Inquiries have shown that there are very few indeed, not above 3 per cent., of the men on tramp who belong to a trades union, or are members of a friendly society, or belong to a burial club.

The great majority, therefore, of the tramps are men who have either sunk from the mechanic to the ordinary labourer, or have never been anything more than a mere common labourer, and have led a careless life.

Whenever there are important works going on in any place and, consequently, a great demand for unskilled labour, men of this class flock to the works, and are put on because workmen must be had, and the employers cannot refuse any.

Men who drink and are, consequently, frequently absent from their work, or who endeavour to shift upon their fellow-workmen a larger proportion of the work than their legitimate share, are the first to be got rid of as soon as work begins to get normal. These men, often strangers to the locality, and without any character to recommend them, are unable to find work in that place, and consequently look out for work in other localities. To get to them, they, being often thriftless, and existing a very short time upon what little money they may have laid by, after a brief period of idleness are obliged to have recourse to the casual wards to help them on their journey. There, accord-

ing to the present system, they meet with men who have studied thoroughly the art of living (and, according to their own idea of comfort, comfortably) without work.

The workman who honestly sets out in search of work, after perhaps two or three disappointments, is induced by these men to enter upon their own kind of life, and begins to be an aimless wanderer about the country. His clothes get worse, his muscles more flaccid, and it becomes more difficult for him day by day to get work, even if he were willing to do it. He has entered upon a fatal course, which ends only when death terminates his life of idleness.

If I am correct in my views, the man who becomes a tramp is the workman employed on some casual job, and, therefore, it seems to me that the requirements for the issue of a way-ticket, as recommended by the Committee, are much too severe. I think it would be better to err on the side of giving too many way-tickets than too few, and that a man who has worked on a casual job should be equally entitled to one with the man who has been regularly employed; whilst I do not think that he should be called upon for any proof that he is likely to keep to his work, the mere assertion on his part to that effect being of little or no value.

The Committee recommend that with regard to vagrancy offences, short sentences should be discouraged. The vagrant needs to be brought back to ways of industry, and, therefore, he requires to become accustomed to work, after a period of idleness, so as to get over the distaste for it, which many of us have suffered from during our lives on resuming work after even a comparatively short holiday. A short sentence would do him harm, and not good.

As the Governor of Wakefield Prison truly remarks: "The characteristics of the tramp are apathy, idleness, and distaste for continuous effort, the rational

treatment for which would seem to be regular life, discipline, and the habit of continuous work."

The Committee, therefore, recommend that the habitual vagrant should be treated not as a criminal, but as a person requiring detention on account of his mode of life, and for that purpose they propose that the class of habitual vagrants shall be defined by statute, and that this class shall include any person who has been three or more times convicted during a period of, say, twelve months, of certain offences now coming under the Vagrancy Act, namely, sleeping out, begging, refusing to perform task of work in casual wards, or refusing or neglecting to maintain himself so that he becomes chargeable to the poor rate. They, moreover, suggest that persons coming within this definition should be committed by a Petty Sessional Court to Quarter Sessions and Assizes, and there dealt with in the same way as the incorrigible rogue, with the exception that the sentence should be committal to a labour colony for a term not exceeding three years; and, in order to identify these people, they recommend that their finger prints should be obtained and registered; that they should be sent to labour colonies for a period of not less than six months or more than three years; and that there should be power to obtain an earlier discharge by good conduct and by earning a certain sum of money as wages in the colony.

Seeing that the object of the scheme is reformation and not punishment, and that to alter the person dealt with, the more ingrained in him the habits which it is desired to eradicate the less likelihood there is of success in that direction, it seems to me that a great and fatal mistake is made by the Commissioners in suggesting that only *habitual* vagrants should be so dealt with. It seems to me that it would be truer kindness to take the man and endeavour to reform him before he has become an *habitual* vagrant; in fact, as soon as

possible after he has ceased to be a wayfarer and has become a vagrant. Instead, therefore, of having to identify the tramp in the manner proposed, and to prove three or more convictions before the man is dealt with for the purpose of reformation, I would suggest that it should be made an offence for any man to apply for a night's lodging in a casual ward without having a way ticket, and that, the mere non-production of such ticket being in itself an offence, a magistrate should have power to commit him for a period of at least six months. Nor do I see why he should be committed only to a labour colony, more especially if such labour colonies are to be county institutions maintained out of the county rate, and not national institutions.

It is said that in a vagrant ward was found the following epitaph on an habitual vagrant :—

“ Here lies a poor fellow who always was tired,
For he lived in a world where too much is required.
Friends, mourn not for me that death doth us sever,
For I am going to do nothing for ever and ever ! ”

To wait to reform a man until he has got into a state in which he looks upon the highest possible bliss as doing nothing for ever and ever, is to court failure. The only chance of success with regard to tramps is to begin as soon as ever they cease to be honest wayfarers and become vagrants ; there is then a good chance of reformation. The man has, perhaps, only just been led astray from the path of honest work, and idleness has not become ingrained in him.

It seems to me also to be a mistake to require, as the Commissioners recommend, that in order to send a man to a labour colony he should have to be brought up before Quarter Sessions or Assizes ; that system would be too cumbrous, and would defeat its own object.

As is the case in Switzerland, a magistrate should have the power to commit the vagrant, and this would

be easy if the mere non-production of the way-ticket were the offence for which the vagrant would have to be committed.

The Commissioners recommend that there should be only one national labour colony, at any rate to begin with, and that the remaining labour colonies should be either local or philanthropic institutions.

It seems to me that the State, having recognised the fact that the tramps are really national paupers, should be prepared to deal with them; and, while I am quite of opinion that there should be labour colonies which should be charitable institutions, and others that might be under the management of County Councils, I think it would be a mistake to be dependent almost entirely upon them.

I think that the State should have labour colonies in the neighbourhood of certain of the large towns where the demand for them would be constant, such labour colonies not exceeding in each case 200 as the number of inmates. If there were no labour colony available or convenient, I would suggest that the vagrant should be sent to prison, but should be dealt with in a different way to ordinary criminals; more like a man who is sent there awaiting his trial. He should be treated there as in a labour colony. He should be allowed to work at his trade, and should be taught a trade if he does not know one. He should be credited with the value of his labour, and debited with the cost of his maintenance, and should be told every month how his account stands. At the end of the time any surplus that might be standing to his credit should be used, in the first place, in furnishing him with a decent suit of clothes, the balance being given him in any post office he chose to mention in instalments of 5s. a week. While in a labour colony or prison he should have means of studying, and recreation, and should be brought under religious influences. By these means there would be a hope

of his being reformed and able to begin life anew under more favourable conditions.

To recapitulate, the Report, excellent as it is in many respects, seems to me to be faulty, inasmuch as—

(1.) It limits the number of wayfarers unduly, not recognising that it is more especially for the casual workman that provision has to be made ;

(2.) It limits the persons who are to be dealt with to habitual vagrants, whereas the man who has just begun vagrancy is the more easy to be reformed ;

(3.) It does not provide a sufficient supply of places where that reformation can be carried out ; and,

(4.) It renders the infliction of the sentence on the vagrant too costly and difficult by relegating it to Quarter Sessions and Assizes.

It may be said that for a working man to be liable to be sent to a labour colony or prison for six months on mere non-production of his way-ticket would press hardly upon him if he were to lose his way-ticket, or if it were stolen from him. This difficulty, however, can be easily dealt with by giving the magistrates power to remit him to the vagrant ward for such a period as would enable the police to make the necessary inquiries into the truth of his allegation.

I have not dealt with the question of women and children vagrants. I am inclined to agree with the Report when it says that the question of female vagrants is comparatively unimportant, and that if the men are removed, the women and children would soon disappear from the roads.

With regard, however, to women vagrants, I would not distinguish their case from the men at all. They should be subject to the same rules and punished in the same manner. With regard to children, I entirely agree with the Report that they should be taken away if brought into the vagrant wards, and sent to the Workhouse.

It may be objected to the stringent measures recommended in this paper that they would cause a good deal of suffering and consequent violence on the part of the habitual tramps, who would not go to the tramps' ward for fear of being reformed, but would endeavour to obtain sufficient money to pay for lodgings by begging and possible intimidation. One must, however, look to the ultimate result and not the immediate effect of any legislation. Where an evil has been allowed to grow up and been fostered by unwise legislation, laws remedying such evil are almost certain to cause temporary inconvenience. Such temporary inconvenience and suffering are, however, a small price to pay for the great good that would be effected by greatly diminishing the class of men who at present contribute nothing to the wealth of the country and prey upon the earnings of workers.

DISCUSSION.

Mr ROBERTS (Leighton Buzzard) said he would like to thank Mr Vulliamy for the many excellent practical suggestions he had made in his paper. Speaking at a Guardians' meeting a short time ago he was suggesting somewhat drastic methods of dealing with tramps, when a member said, "What would you do with them? Would you shoot them?" Well, that would certainly be a summary way of dealing with them, but if they could be swept away from the face of the earth, it would be a good thing for humanity at large. They were noxious weeds, and ought to be exterminated in every possible way. The idea of tramps having tickets which would pass them on when they were genuine men seemed to him to be an excellent one. He lived in a neighbourhood where tramps often called, and the first thing he said to a man was, "Open your hand." In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred it was whiter than his own, and this was clear evidence that the man had not done work for a considerable time. (Laughter.) When he found that such was the case he generally said, "Next door to me the police officer resides," and the fellow quickly walked away. Last week two men told him that they were making their way—the one to Sheffield and the other to Portsmouth. Their reason for going was that some friend had some work which they might get to do. But when they were asked, "Where was your last place of work?" they could give no satisfactory answer. If

tickets could be issued by some police authority it would undoubtedly be a very good thing. One man (a Welshman) once asked him for a job, and he did give him a fortnight's work. At the end of that time he went away happy and contented. But the majority of them would look at the work, especially when it was manuring at 6d. per two hours, and walk away. He would send every man who could not give a proper account of himself to something worse than a labour colony—to a gaol, where he would not be treated perhaps exactly as a criminal, but precious near it. If drastic measures of this kind were carried out we should very soon see these pests of society driven from the road. In this country, undoubtedly, we were now exporting to a larger extent than for many years, and trade looked prosperous, but he would like to know how that worked out in comparison with the number of hands employed. The introduction of labour-saving machinery must tend to throw more casual labour on to the country, and it looked to him very much as if something in the land laws was wrong. There ought to be a greater opening in regard to uncultivated land, and in that way casual labour might be employed. How this was to be brought about, and who was to bring it about, was not perhaps a subject for discussion at a Conference, but it was a very important point. In his own neighbourhood there were hundreds of acres uncultivated, capable of growing corn—and if more land could be brought into cultivation he thought they would hear less of the unemployed and be able to deal in a more drastic way with the tramps. (Hear, hear.)

Mr E. R. BALL (Wellingborough) said Mr Vulliamy had expressed the opinion that it would be best to begin with the tramp. He certainly agreed with that. Take the case of a genuine workman, out of work for three or four weeks, with a wife and family. He spent all the money he had, and then went on tramp, travelling from town to town in search of work. That man ought to be treated far better than the habitual tramp. He himself had relieved some hundreds of trade union men travelling through the country in search of work. The Board of Guardians at Wellingborough had passed a resolution that where a man had a trade union ticket or belonged to a friendly society, or even if he had a note from his last employer recommending him as a good workman, he should have his night's lodging, his food next morning, and be sent on his way, so long as he agreed not to return for three months. It had been argued that these men should have tickets from the police. The ticket he agreed with, but whether the police were the proper parties to distribute them he did not know. (Hear, hear.) There were often people living in a district whom the police would be glad to get rid of in that way. All the time he was relieving officer to various trade unions, he never had any one who came to him bringing a lot of children. Mr Vulliamy had said that he did not propose to touch the question of the children. He (Mr Ball) certainly thought something should be done to stop tramps from dragging children from

town to town. They simply used the children, who very often were not their own, as a means of extorting money from people. Such men should be punished, and the children taken away from them. (Hear, hear.) The Wellingborough Board had a man—the most difficult customer they had to contend with—who travelled about the country, going into various Workhouses, and who had been sent at the expense of Boards to Liverpool, Brighton, Bedford, and scores of places. He pretended he was ill, and went into the infirmaries, and when he was sent home he turned round and said, "I don't require your assistance." Then he walked off again, and in this way he had cost various Boards of Guardians pounds and pounds. They had tried everything at Wellingborough, but there was no law by which they could reach him, and it was very clear that the system required altering. If something could be done to distinguish the genuine man from the habitual tramp, it certainly should be done. (Hear, hear.)

Sir EDMUND VERNEY said he was not prepared to oppose Mr Vulliamy's proposal to hand this matter over to the police, because he was not prepared to suggest any better authority, but there was a possibility of some danger in it. There was such a great difference in the police. For instance, the police of the towns, as a rule, were more trustworthy than the police of the country. That was his experience, and he attributed it very much to the fact that in most places they were under a Town Council. They were under popular government, and had to take care what they did; whereas the police in the rural districts had to take care to keep in good favour with the game preservers and the fox-hunters. (Laughter.) Really it made one angry at times to see the insolence of the police to some of the people brought up before the county magistrates—it was perfectly atrocious. They said, "Come here," or "Stand there," and pushed them about, and this was done with people against whom nothing had been proved. Everybody should be treated with the utmost courtesy, no matter what they might be suspected of, and he thought that if this matter of the tramps was handed over to the police it would be likely to give serious offence in the country districts, at any rate in some he knew of. At the same time he was bound to say that he could not suggest a better authority, though it was clear that the police would have to be very carefully watched. One of the usual complaints of men was that the police would not leave them alone, but followed them about, tracked them, and when they were trying to do better gave information to their employers. This was very often said when it was not the case, but he knew from his own knowledge that it was sometimes true. It was suggested that a small task of work should be given to the honest wayfarer. Personally, he would give him no work at all. The honest wayfarer who was, at his own expense, carrying his labour from where it was not wanted to where it was wanted was a public benefactor. There was an allusion in the paper to the man who desired a life of idle-

ness ; well, they most of them desired that. (Laughter.) It was the chief object people worked for, rich as well as poor. He did not suppose there would be any difficulty in finding 200 or 300 men that afternoon who did not know what to do with themselves, they were so idle. They were to be found in the London clubs and haunting all sorts of places. Such people were constantly to be met with, and therefore he would not hold up a tramp to disrepute on that account. (Laughter.) Another remark he would like to make was on the genesis of the tramp. That was an important point. Where did they come from? We were making tramps every day. He was afraid that the worst of all came from the great desire of parents to get work out of their children at an early age ; instead of keeping them at school or putting them to learn some trade, the children were turned out at the earliest possible moment to earn a little money to add to the revenue of the family. This was very sad, because thereby a boy merely became an unskilled labourer for the whole of his life. Instead of learning something which might make them useful to their country, the children were engaged in holding horses, scaring birds, or some other unskilled work. Out of this sprang the next point — the quantity of second-rate work that was available. First-rate work was never so highly paid for as it was to-day. The difficulty in getting first-rate men increased year by year, but there was an abundance of second raters. He knew a man who said that there were only two men in London who could do a certain job for him, and one of them was a drunkard. It was difficult to get men to take pride and interest in their work, and this grew up from the fact that children were employed too young in bringing revenue into the family. These, then, were the two chief sources from which the tramps were derived. There had been something said to day against compulsory detention, but his impression was that compulsory detention was at the root of the whole thing. If they could not have compulsory detention he did not think anything else was worth considering. (Hear, hear.) It was no use sending people to the labour colony or anywhere else unless there was compulsory detention. That lay at the root of all dealing with the tramp question. He had read Mr Vulliamy's paper with all the attention it deserved. There was nobody who could speak to them with more authority and experience than Mr Vulliamy, and whether they agreed with everything he said or not they were very grateful indeed to him for his paper. (Applause.)

Mrs GRAFTON (Bedford) urged that with the poor mothers only receiving 2s. or 1s. 6d. for their child it was not astonishing that they sent them out to earn a few shillings whenever possible. The mothers were not in a position to give them trades and professions, and the country must have labourers.

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY remarked that he had drawn a good deal of scorn upon himself that morning by what he had said with regard to dealing gently with people. He must admit that so far as tramps

were concerned he had very little pity or sympathy with them, and his own experience was that Guardians as a rule did not wish to deal with them. At the present time they were dealt with by the officers of the Unions rather than by the Guardians, and for his own part he would be glad to get rid of that portion of his responsibility altogether. Sir Edmund Verney had given good reasons why perhaps the police were not perhaps the very best people in the world to deal with a somewhat complicated question. They did a great deal for our comfort, but they were a little over-anxious at times to run people in, and he would like to see some other authority over the tramps. He was speaking recently to an Education Inspector, who told him he was very often stranded at a railway station, and that he occupied part of his spare time in talking to tramps, and very interesting conversations he had with them. This gentleman stated that he told one man he would help him if he would give up tramping about, but not with money. The man replied, "I have been doing it now for a good many years, and I should not think of giving it up." Another tramp, an old man, asked for help, and the Inspector said, "Well, I will help you for one reason only. Can you tell me what that reason is?" The man scratched his head, and after thinking it over seriously said, "No, sir, I can't." He could not find a single reason why he should be helped! The reason was that he was getting an old man. After referring to the indignation which they all felt when they saw children being dragged about the country, Mr Beasley said he had a man call at his house a little time ago. There was a little girl about ten years of age with him, and he felt so sorry for the child that he did offer to lend the man enough to take him to his destination. Needless to say he never saw anything more of the money. (Laughter.) But he saw the man again, and he said to him, "Let me see, I lent you 5s. to take your child to Wigston with." His reply was, "No, sir, I have never been here before," but he (Mr Beasley) told him that he was sure he had—that he had good reason for not forgetting the past. (Laughter.) At the same time he was quite sure that there were people who really did deserve to be helped. Still, with the great majority of tramps they could have no sympathy, and these men often subjected ladies to considerable insults. Those who did should be very severely dealt with; he would punish with more than usual severity any tramp guilty of offering personal insult to any one on the road. The whole subject requires dealing with the greatest possible wisdom, and in such a way as to get rid, if possible, of tramps altogether. (Hear, hear.)

Mr E. G. COLE thanked Mr Vulliamy for his splendid paper, which he believed to be on the right lines. It was an excellent idea that the police should take control of the tramps, for although they might not be perfect, the police were, in his opinion, the most perfect body we had at the present time to deal with tramps. The ticket system he was entirely in accord with, and this was a matter

he had spoken about many times. The intention of the tramp—ward at first was to provide shelter for respectable men who were going from one part of the country to another in search of work. He had been into the Edmonton tramp wards many times; he used to make a practice of going over them at least four times a week. Nearly the whole of the men he had seen there never had been workers; they never would work. They found it profitable to loaf about. One of them said to him, "There was fools born every day, and you have only to find them." A tramp with a child had evidently had the vicar for 5s.—(laughter)—and another with two children would probably soon be doing him for half-a-sovereign. (Laughter.) He knew of men who got sufficient money to keep themselves with by letting children out day by day; he could give the names of men who never had worked and never would work because they could get a good income in this way. There were a good many tramps travelling with children who did not belong to them, and there always would be so long as there were soft-hearted stupid people ready to give them money. (Laughter.) There were one or two imbeciles on his own Board who were continually complaining of the way in which the Guardians treated the tramps. If they acted as one or two of these Guardians would like them to, they would soon be having all the tramps in England in Edmonton, and they had too many already. Wherever these men were treated with firmness there were very few of them about, but wherever there was "mawkish sentimentality" the district got shoals of them. Boards of Guardians were utterly unfit to handle these men: an authority such as the police was necessary, and from the police the tramp could receive his ticket. The last place a tramp would go to was where he could obtain work. The ticket system and the penal colony for men who would not work would solve the whole problem; but until there was this colony and the men were made to work, little would be done. (Hear, hear.)

Mrs G. H. EDWARDS (Brentford) urged that if they did away (as suggested by the Committee on Vagrancy) with charity so-called, with the indiscriminate giving which did not merit the name of charity, the tramp would disappear. This was not a suggestion made by people who did not know what they were talking about; it was the serious assertion of people who had been considering this subject for years. Until the charitable public acted in the matter it was no use to talk about restrictions.

Colonel CLARK expressed the opinion that a great deal of the so-called charity was not charity at all, but money wrung out of the wives of cottagers and small farmers in the country. The tramp demanded food or money, and very often he got it because the woman was afraid to refuse it. He believed they were supported quite as much in that way as by the charity of richer people. Until this could be stopped in some way the tramp would never be done away with.

Mr E. D. COURT, as a very keen admirer of the Committee on

Vagrancy, said he was very pleased to read Mr Vulliamy's paper. Mr Vulliamy went further than the Report in one instance and that was in the issuing of way-tickets to all classes who could show that they had done, or wished to do, any work at all. It seemed to him (Mr Court) that the number would be so widened as to cover every habitual vagrant, and Mr Vulliamy, by another proposal, would empower a single magistrate to send to a penal colony any person who came to a casual ward without a way-ticket. Every old stager would be bound to get this way-ticket if he was to go to a casual ward at all, and that would enormously increase the number of people who would go to those wards. At present the great bulk only dropped in occasionally. The question as to whether one magistrate should have such considerable powers given to him was a matter which deserved consideration. The important points upon which Mr Vulliamy agreed with the Vagrancy Committee's Report were the handing over of the tramps to the police and the setting up of these penal colonies with long periods of detention. He (Mr Court) thought that if they all agreed upon these points there would be some hope of something being done. There was the objection of the police to taking over these duties to be considered. (Hear, hear.)

A GUARDIAN—The police don't want them, sir.

MR COURT—Then there is all the more reason for the Guardians to meet them half way. Continuing, Mr Court spoke of the difficulty of getting truthful information from men in casual wards as to their names, ages, &c. The only method to check them was by the way-ticket. He gave instances of men who went into the house at an interval of a few days under different names, and said that it was really impossible to classify them or to believe a word they said. Another point was the brutality of tramps in many country districts, and he would like to go a little further than the Committee's Report in dealing with brutal tramps. The other day he was speaking to a man who was grinding stones—a task which gave no premium for skill, and required steady work. This man disliked it very much, more than stone breaking, and said how much worse the treatment was in casual wards—the food and work—than it was in gaols. Another reason perhaps for handing these people over to the police was that the necessity would be seen for making things a bit harder in gaol. The man added that he was going to do so-and-so to half-a dozen people in the district, and when told that he would probably be hanged, he said, "That would just suit me ; my cousin is going to be hung to-day." This might have been true or not—a man was being hanged that day—but at any rate it showed the difficulty the Guardians were put to, for this fellow was strong and powerful and a terror to the district. The Committee's Report in regard to this class of tramp was made simply to be tried for the present, but he believed that it was absolutely essential to go in for more complete control, and behind the police station would be the best place for the wards. Another point was that some power should be given to the

police of inspecting lodging-houses, and if they had more control over these places it would certainly be an advantage. (Hear, hear.)

Mr C. J. SCOTT (Northampton) said he would like to see this tramp question settled, if only owing to the hardening and brutalising effect it seemed to have on certain classes. When he heard people talk about men being dealt with drastically, shot and hung, when people were so hard and contemptuous and unmanly, he could not help but think that it was time the question was got rid of. He wished to see it settled for the sake of the tramps themselves. They were the victims of a system. They had become what they were through force of circumstances. A man got thrown out of work through the introduction of machinery or for some other cause. What was he to do? Work was denied him, and he had to beg, steal, bet, or die of starvation. If that man had pluck and enterprise and was refused work, he would become a beggar or a thief. A great many of the upper classes respected men who starved quietly at home. He (the speaker) contended that if a man could not get a living properly he was entitled to get it as well as he could, and there was no blame attaching to him. Let every man have a legal right to work for a living! No man of the working classes had that right now, and the question could only be solved by providing work for all those who were thrown out of employment by machinery, &c. "Don't wait," continued Mr Scott, "for them to become demoralised. As for the tramp, whom you have created——"

A GUARDIAN—Say we, sir.

Mr SCOTT—No, not I. I am a Socialist. (Laughter.) Those who refused the tramps this right to work were responsible for their degraded condition. In olden times these men were shot and hanged for being tramps, but these drastic measures did not solve the problem, and they would fail now. Tramps should be given the right to work, and if they were confirmed loafers——

Mr COLE—What would you do then?

Mr SCOTT—Compel them against their will to do work—it would be useful discipline.

Mr COLE—How are you going to do it?

Mr SCOTT—Do not treat them as criminals—(hear, hear)—treat them as brothers. That was what these tramps were after all. He had heard ministers and others plead eloquently for the heathens in Africa and Asia, men who would kill and eat each other. Tramps had not fallen as low as that, and yet the hearts of these gentlemen were filled with hatred and contempt for them.

Mr COLE—How would you make them work, if they won't work? If you will tell me that, it will be the first time I ever knew a Socialist with a practical suggestion.

Mr SCOTT—I believe I have given you a few this afternoon.

Mr COLE—Well, what would you do?

Mr SCOTT—Well, let the men starve then. (Ironical cries of "Shame"; and a Voice, "That's Socialism.") But these men were

not fools, and rather than die of starvation they would work for a living. Reference had been made to the rich loafers, and one rich loafer who was getting £10,000, or £20,000, or £50,000 a year cost the community more than thousands of these poor tramps. He trusted that they would deal with this question in a more humane way than they had been accustomed to deal with it in the past. There was a great party in this country returning thirty members to Parliament who would have a voice in the settlement of the tramp question.

Rev. A. JARVIS said it was very interesting to discover that the principle which they were advocating was somewhat Socialistic—it was to make these men work.

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY, replying to the discussion, said that the object of the paper was to provide work for those who wanted work. With regard to indiscriminate charity, there was no doubt that it was at the root of a great deal of the present evil, but he thought the evil would be very much diminished if persons would ask a man who might be begging: "Have you a way ticket? If so, show it to me." They would know at once then if these men were really tramps; if they had a way-ticket they might be legitimately helped. Objection had been offered to the police giving out these tickets, and they had heard that the town and the county police were very different. Well, he had to do with both. In Ipswich the police had for the last thirty years taken down the names of tramps, and given them tickets with exceedingly useful results. That was the town police. He was a county coroner, and he came across a great many of the county police, and he could not at all endorse the remark made as to their inefficiency. (Hear, hear.) He found them a thoroughly efficient body of men, and they had a great many duties—civil duties—to perform beyond looking after the partridges or the squire. The police constable in many districts was looked up to, and consulted on a great many points outside his duties. Consequently, he believed they would be found to be thoroughly efficient in any work that might be given them to do. Some people said, "They will give tickets to everybody." He did not believe it. They would give them to men genuinely in search of work, not to the tramp. He was quite prepared himself to trust the police to discharge their duties zealously and efficiently. With regard to the children it had been suggested in the paper that they should be taken away from vagrant wards into the Workhouse. It was quite true that the children were very commonly not the children of the vagrants at all, and years ago they passed a resolution at Ipswich to the effect that they would take all these children from their so-called parents into the House. The Local Government Board, however, said that they had no power to do so, and they had, consequently, to give the idea up. But between the period the resolution was passed and the Local Government Board's reply not a single child went into the tramps' ward. His opinion was, that the scheme he suggested in his paper would help

the honest wayfarer very much indeed in his search for work. (Hear, hear.) It had been said that he ought to have no task. He believed so himself once, but a constable told him that respectable men entered the tramp wards, and when asked the reason why, they said: "Well, we get a clean up, and food, and we don't pay anything for it. We are better off than if we went to a lodging-house." It seemed to him that there was a good deal of truth in this, and the only way to guard against it was by requiring all men to do a task of work. He quite agreed that there was much to be said on the question of children being sent early to work. Parents who were earning little were naturally desirous that their children should be at work as soon as possible. He has long come to the conclusion that what would help very materially would be that should be two years' compulsory night schools instead of the last year's schooling. (Hear, hear.) The longer a child was at school the better he remembered what he was learning, and if he could be kept there compulsorily until fifteen years of age it would be better than allowing him to leave day schools at the age of fourteen. In conclusion, Mr Vulliamy said it had been urged that his scheme regarding the tickets gave the magistrate enormous power. What he proposed was that the non-production of the way-ticket should be in itself an offence. That was a simple thing for any magistrate to deal with, and it would give no enormous power to him. (Hear, hear.)

Sir EDMUND VERNEY proposed a hearty vote of thanks to Mrs Edwards and to Mr Vulliamy for their papers. It was a great honour to him to be asked to propose this vote to those to whom they were so deeply indebted. They had all observed what great pains Mrs Edwards had taken with her subject—her paper did not show merely superficial knowledge. She had entered in a very sympathetic way into the scheme which prevailed in Denmark for dealing with paupers and tramps, and though they might not all agree with it, there was something they could all learn from the paper. (Hear, hear.) When he referred to anything prepared by Mr Vulliamy he did so with the greatest possible respect, for Mr Vulliamy had studied Poor Law questions more perhaps than anybody else in England. It was a great honour for them to have had this paper from him, a paper which embodied and taught them almost the whole of the result of the most of the Commission on the subject. (Hear, hear.) Both the readers of the papers would have felt, he thought, that the meeting had been very unanimous. The object they all had at heart was to take the tramp off the road and bring him into the lines of the honest labouring men, and all the speakers, he was sure, had been animated by that one feeling and that one motive. Some of them had perhaps spoken rather lightly about drastic measures, but that had only been on the surface. They felt, in fact, a deep sympathy for many of the tramps who had been forced on the road by circumstances not under their own control. He had pleasure in proposing this vote of thanks, for they were indeed deeply indebted to Mrs Edwards and to Mr

Vulliamy for the light they had thrown on these matters. (Applause.)

Mr E. G. COLB, in seconding, said, that they had had two excellent papers, both of which had been well discussed. The Conference had certainly been a profitable one. He remembered that they had a good Conference at Northampton six years ago, and, he, for one, was now going home delighted that for once his Socialistic friends and he agreed. It was the admission, and he had never had it from one of them before, that if a man would not work he must starve. (Laughter, and hear, hear.)

The resolution was then put and heartily adopted.

Mrs EDWARDS, in acknowledgment, said it had been a labour of love to her to prepare the paper.

Mr VULLIAMY also returned thanks, and said that he had not expected to find so much unanimity in regard to his paper.

Mr COURT proposed a cordial vote of thanks to Mr Brown for the excellent way in which he had conducted the proceedings. No wonder the Northampton Guardians did their work very thoroughly. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. T. C. BEASLEY, seconding, said that Mr Brown was one of the most industrious men in the Board room.

The proposition was heartily carried, and the President said he was only too pleased that the Conference had been a success. (Applause.)

The proceedings then terminated.

Annual Central Conference.

REPORT OF THE PROCEEDINGS

OF THE

THIRTY-FIFTH ANNUAL CENTRAL POOR LAW CONFERENCE, HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER OF THE GUILDHALL, LONDON, ON THE 19TH AND 20TH FEBRUARY 1907.

President—THE RIGHT HON. WALTER H. LONG, M.P.

The following Unions were represented at the Conference (the list has been compiled with care, and omissions, if any, are due to the delegates having failed to give up their tickets or to sign their names):—

METROPOLITAN DIVISION.

(31 Unions—20 represented.)

BETHNAL GREEN—

Eickhoff, W.
James, Miss M. E.

CAMBERWELL—

Harmer, Miss S.
Morris, Mrs E.

CITY OF LONDON—

Wild, John B., C.C. (Chairman).
Woodward, E. R. (Clerk).

FULHAM—

Probert, Rev. P. S. G. (Chairman).
Botterill, C. (Vice-Chairman).
Mott, E. J. (Clerk).
Miles, Miss M. C.

GREENWICH—

Beattie, Alex. (Chairman).
Keay, J. H., M.D.

HACKNEY—

Copp, Samuel.
Salaman, W.

HAMMERSMITH—

Davies, Lieut.-Colonel T. W.
Graves, Mrs E. E.

HAMPSTEAD—

Monro, Mrs M.
Payne, E. S.

HOLBORN—

Baker, Miss I. M., M.A.B.
Garrity, Edward.

ISLINGTON—

Barrett, Mrs Margaret.
Lander, Malcolm T.

KENSINGTON—

Alexander, Miss.
Fleming, Sir Francis, K.C.M.G.
Rickards, A. G., K.C.
Wilde, Miss M. J.

LAMBETH—
Fielder, Frederick.

LEWISHAM—
Bayton, W. W.
Clarke, Leonard.

PADDINGTON—
Baker, Herbert Arthur.
Jones, Mrs Elizabeth.

POPLAR—
Cordery, Mrs E. J.
Diamond, B.

ST PANCRAS—
Miall-Smith, Mrs H. C.
Wettenhall, W. J., J.P., M.A.B.

STRAND—
Brown, G. S. (Vice-Chairman).
Evans, Mrs Matilda M.

STEPNEY—
Davis, J. W. (Chairman).
Higley, Rev. F. H.

WHITECHAPEL—

WOOLWICH—
Pine, Mrs E. J.
Cutter, Tom (Clerk).

SOUTH-EASTERN DIVISION.

(96 Unions—43 represented.)

Berkshire.

(12 Unions—6 represented.)

ABINGDON—
Clutterbuck, Rev. F. C. (Chairman).
Challenor, Bromley (Clerk).

BRADFIELD—
Shepherd, Rev. Alfred, J.P. (Vice-Chairman).
Harding, John.
Willink, H. G.

MAIDENHEAD—
Cox, C. W., J.P. (Chairman).
Lowe, G., C.C.

NEWBURY—

READING—
Connolly, P.
Moring, F. E.
Rainbow, H. G.
Stebbing, Wm.
Huggins, E. J. W. (Clerk).

WALLINGFORD—
King, J. Pittman, J.P. (Chairman).
Bliss, Wm., J.P.
Wells, T. F.
Slade, G. F. (Clerk).

Southampton.

(26 Unions—9 represented.)

ALVERSTOKE—
Hawkins, G. (Chairman).
Rogers, R. H.
Bulmer, F. B. (Clerk).

BASINGSTOKE—

HARTLEY WINTNEY—
Walkinshaw, Frank (Chairman).
Hitchcock, A.
Johnston, J. Lindsay.

DROXFORD—
Lang, W.
Lunn, C.
Pearson, H. G. (Clerk).

ISLE OF WIGHT—
Baker, Frederick, C.A.
Marvin, G. H.

PORTSMOUTH—
Timpson, J. (Chairman).
Woodeson, H. L. (Vice-Chairman).
Mitchell, E. H. (Clerk).

SOUTH STONEHAM—
Jerram, W. H.
Röhas, H. B.

SOUTHAMPTON—
Reed, R. H. (Chairman).
Walton, W. (Vice-Chairman).

WINCHESTER—
Hunt, Wm. A.

Kent.

(26 Unions—16 represented.)

BLEAN—

Rigden, A.
Ryley, Rev. G. C. E.
Burch, J. E. (Clerk).

BROMLEY—

Hall, Mrs E.
Stenning, Miss.
Haslehurst, E. (Clerk).

CANTERBURY—

Horne, Wm. (Chairman).
Stone, J. G. B. (Vice-Chairman).

DARTFORD—

DOVER—

Carder, Eugene (Clerk).

EASTRY—

Thomas, Rev. Wm. C.

ELHAM—

Myers, Henry.
Smiles, Joseph G.

GRAVESEND—

Harrington, W. J.
Hayward, W. J.

HOLLINGBOURN—

Cooke, Richard.

MAIDSTONE—

MALLING—

Beadle, H. T.
Bird, Oliver J. L.

MEDWAY—

Billinghurst, E. A.
Breton, Col. H. D. A., R.E.
Craske, W. R., J.P.
Evans, Mrs F. H.
Norman, A. Reynolds (Clerk).

STROOD—

Tolhurst, Alfred, J.P.

TENTERDEN—

Hall, Rev. C. Berney.

THANET (ISLE OF)—

Coleman, Joseph (Chairman).
Bull, Rev. H., M.A., J.P.

TONBRIDGE—

Grover, George (Chairman).
Ludlow, Miss.

Surrey.

(11 Unions—8 represented.)

CROYDON—

Aubrey, Dr W. H. S.
Shirley, G. J. (Chairman).

EPSOM—

Brown, W. S. J.
Shaw, Rev. J., C.C.

FARNHAM—

Doman, Harry.
Jeffries, T. B.

GODSTONE—

Cook, Miss C. E.
Gill, Miss C. M.

GUILDFORD—

Jones, C.
Newman, H.
Cullerne, W. S. V. (Clerk).

HAMBLEDON—

Welch, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).

KINGSTON—

RICHMOND—

Cook, W. J. (Vice-Chairman).
Goldney, Rev. S.

Sussex.

(21 Unions—4 represented.)

EASTBOURNE—

Brodie-Hall, Miss.
M'Cann, J.
Matthews, R.
Hurst, Albert (Clerk).

EAST PRESTON—

Amphlett, E. G., J. P.
Yorke, E.

NEWHAVEN—

Cooper, Allan (Chairman).
Coupe, H. W. (Clerk).

THAKEHAM—

Ersline, James M. M., J. P.
Flowers, Arthur (Clerk).

SOUTH MIDLAND DIVISION.

(64 Unions—28 represented.)

Bedfordshire.

(5 Unions—3 represented.)

BEDFORD—

King, C. (Chairman).
Hartop, W.
Kelaart, Miss.
Payne, W. (Clerk).

LEIGHTON BUZZARD—

Batchelar, G. (Vice-Chairman).
Adams, J. J. R.
Harrowell, Alfred.

LUTON—

Cook, A. J.
Impey, H.
Austin, W. (Clerk).

Buckinghamshire.

(7 Unions—2 represented.)

BUCKINGHAM—

Denchfield, F. W. (Chairman).
Hawes, T.
Verney, Sir Edmund, Bart.

WYCOMBE—

Lunnon, T. G. (Chairman).
Smith, George.
Reynolds, B. L. (Clerk).

Cambridgeshire.

(9 Unions—3 represented.)

CAMBRIDGE—

Heal, W. H.
Rackham, Mrs C. D.

CAXTON AND ARRINGTON—

Green, Wm. James.
Paine, J. K.

ELY—**Huntingdonshire.**

(3 Unions—1 represented.)

HUNTINGDON—

Brawn, Wm. (Chairman).
Gadsby, W., J. P.

Hertfordshire.

(12 Unions—4 represented.)

BISHOP'S STORTFORD—

Hegan, Mrs.
Chisenhale-Marsh, Miss.
Wood, Rev. John.

ALBANS, ST—

Taylor, Rev. H. W.

WARE—

Evans, Rev. J. C.
Groom, Wm.

WATFORD—

Syme, W. H.

Middlesex.

(7 Unions—5 represented.)

BRENTFORD—

Clark, Colonel.
Edwards, T. J.
Riach, Miss J. E.

EDMONTON—

Sharp, Rev. C. J. (Chairman).

HENDON—

Brown, Miss J. C.
Gunns, Mrs E.
Smart, Mrs A.

UXBRIDGE—

Bailey, Arthur.
Pavier, John.

WILLESDEN—
Chamberlain, J.
Mackenzie, J.

Northamptonshire.

(12 Unions—7 represented.)

BRACKLEY—
Cartwright, Miss B. A.
Barnes, C. E. (Clerk).

BRIXWORTH—
Collis, A. H. (Vice-Chairman).
Gibbs, J. G.
Woodford, Wm. C. (Clerk).

DAVENTRY—
Ellard, Edwin.
Sanders, Rev. E. T.

KETTERING—
Page, Mrs Elizabeth.
Harris, Wm.
Lane, Charles W. (Clerk).

NORTHAMPTON—
Spokes, W. B.
Sykes, E. W.

OUNDL—

PETERBOROUGH—
Clayton, Mrs.
Little, H., J.P. (Chairman).

Oxfordshire.

(9 Unions—3 represented.)

BANBURY—
Page, J. W., J.P. (Chairman).
Gillett, Mrs S. B.
Fisher, E. Lamley (Clerk).

HENLEY—
Chamberlain, Edmund (Vice-Chairman).
Lloyds, Arthur R. (Clerk).

OXFORD—
Harris, W. R.
Jackson, Ephraim.
Grubb, R. J.

WEST MIDLAND DIVISION.

(82 Unions—33 represented.)

Gloucestershire.

(17 Unions—7 represented.)

BRISTOL—
Tyack, E. C. (Chairman).
Simpson, J. J. (Clerk).

CIRENCESTER—
Cripps, F. W. B. (Vice-Chairman).
Griffiths, W.
Rawlins, H. St G. (Clerk).

GLOUCESTER—
Birchall, J. Dearman.
Armitage, H. Allen (Clerk).

NORTHLEACH—
Hicks-Beach, The Hon. M. H., M.P.

THORNBURY—
Bruton, C. G.
Stamp, J. H.

WESTBURY-ON-SEVERN—

WHEATENHURST—
Lloyd-Baker, G. E., J.P. (Chairman).

Herefordshire.

(8 Unions—2 represented.)

HEREFORD—
Ronalds, Hugh (Chairman).

WEOBLEY—

Salop.

(15 Unions—2 represented.)

ATCHAM—
Everest, Joseph (Clerk).

OSWESTRY—
Walford, John H. M., J.P.

Staffordshire.

(16 Unions—10 represented.)

BURTON-ON-TRENT—
Massey, E. Martin.
Thompson, F.
Chamberlin, C. F. (Clerk).

CANNOCK—
Alsop, Rev. A. R.
Cooper, Jos.
Carver, A. W. (Clerk).

CHEADLE—

Cox, F. S. (Clerk).

CONGLETON—

Jettand, H.

DUDLEY—Higgs, T. F. W.
Coster, Gaius W. (Clerk).**STOKE-ON-TRENT—**Williams, Rev. W.
Hallam, E.
Daniel, C. (Clerk).**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME—****WEST BROMWICH—**James, A. A. (Chairman).
Jewell, G.
Ward, Henry (Clerk).**WOLSTANTON AND BURSLEM—**Downing, G. K. (Chairman).
Heaton, J. T.
Lowndes, Joseph A. (Clerk).**WOLVERHAMPTON—**Pritchard, W. H. (Chairman).
Aldridge, A. G.
Gibson, F. J.**Warwickshire.**

(14 Unions—6 represented.)

ASTON—Williams, T. O. (Chairman).
Eddowes, Mrs.
Goddard, Miss.
James, Alfred H.
North, John (Clerk).**BIRMINGHAM—**Turner, J. R. (Chairman).
Jukes, Frank.
Fletcher, C. (Clerk).**COVENTRY—**Wilson, George (Chairman).
Allchurch, S. (Vice-Chairman).
Arch, James (Clerk).**RUGBY—**Morris, Wm.
Ringrose, T.
Pendred, J. W. (Clerk).**SHIPSTON-ON-STOUR—**

Stanley, Samuel.

WARWICK—Banner, James.
Davis, Wm.
Passman, C. H. (Clerk).**Worcestershire.**

(11 Unions—6 represented.)

DROITWICH—Amphlett, R. H., K.C.
Philips, Robt.**EVESHAM—****KING'S NORTON—**Bayliss, T. A. (Vice-Chairman).
Barlow, Fred.
Curtis, R. J. (Clerk).**PERSHORE—**Parkes, T. W.
Baker, Arthur E. (Clerk).**STOURBRIDGE—**M'Nulty, Rev. T. J. (Chairman).
Parkes, G. B. (Vice-Chairman).
James, G. F. (Clerk).**WORCESTER—**Kenward, H. B. (Chairman).
Browne, Mrs Walter.
Shield, J. G. (Clerk).**NORTH MIDLAND DIVISION.**

(45 Unions—16 represented.)

Derby.

(9 Unions—4 represented.)

ASHBOURNE—

Finney, T.

BELPER—Allen, Henry.
Dann, John.
Strutt, The Hon. F.
Pym, J. (Clerk).**CHESTERFIELD—**Houston, J. P.
Robinson, Captain W.

DERBY—

Potter, J. (2nd Vice-Chairman).
Thwaite, E. M.
Twigg, N. (Clerk).

Leicestershire.

(11 Unions—5 represented.)

ASHBY-DE-LA-ZOUCH—

Adcock, John P. (Chairman).
Pratt, Mrs.

BARROW-ON-SOAR—

Smith, J. S., J.P. (Chairman).
Goodacre, Charles (Vice-Chairman).
Forward, T. (Clerk).

LEICESTER—

Chamberlain, Thomas.
Collis, J. G.
Harrison, Joseph L.
Mansfield, Herbert (Clerk).

LUTTERWORTH—

Buck, T. P.
Bodycote, T. C. (Clerk).

MARKET HARBOROUGH—

Danby, Rev. C. E. (Chairman).
Pulteney, Rev. A. W.

Lincolnshire.

(15 Unions—3 represented.)

GRIMSBY—

Jeffs, Charles (Vice-Chairman).

LINCOLN—

Codling, George.
Hodgett, Mrs.

SPALDING—

Farrow, Mrs Pickworth.

Nottinghamshire.

(8 Unions—4 represented.)

BASFORD—

Furse, W. J. (Chairman).
Clifton, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
Spencer, C. J. (Clerk).

NOTTINGHAM—

Ward, Thomas (Chairman).
Tustin, G. (Vice-Chairman).
Palmer, Thomas.
Howard, G. Muncaster (Clerk).

MANSFIELD—

Round, T.
Wilson, J. L.

WORKSOP—

Chapman, John, Jun.
Crookes, Wm.

EASTERN DIVISION.

(54 Unions—20 represented.)

Essex.

(16 Unions—9 represented.)

BRAINTREE—

Butler, Walter.
Packe, Rev. W. J.

CHELMSFORD—

Snelling, C. B.
Speakman, H. H.

DUNMOW—

Hasler, Robt., C.A. (Vice-Chairman).

HALSTEAD—

Goodchild, T. W.
Oakley, Rev. E. H.
Worden, Miss Lucy.

ORSETT—

Brooks, Mrs (Vice-Chairman).
Umfreville, W. H.
Waller, Mrs.

ROCHFORD—

Lamb, Colonel D. C. (S.A.).
Seel, Mrs.

ROMFORD—

Clarke, Alexander.
Moss, T. W.

SAFFRON WALDEN—

Fisher, Rev. Canon (Chairman).
Middlehurst, J.

WEST HAM—

Hughes, W. R.
Kerrison, Miss.
Prichard, Rev. A. G.

Norfolk.

(21 Unions—6 represented.)

BLOFIELD—

Kidner, Thomas.

EAST AND WEST FLEGG—

Tacon, Rev. Richard J., J.P.
(Chairman).

ERPINGHAM—
Fullagar, Rev. H. S. (Chairman).

KING'S LYNN—
Fisher, H. G.

YARMOUTH, GREAT—
Harbord, Arthur, J.P. (Chairman).
Greenacre, H. T.
Lacey, B.

ST FAITH'S—
Sage, Rev. G.

Suffolk.

(17 Unions—5 represented.)

COSFORD—
Corry, Colonel the Hon. H. W. L.,
C.C., J.P.
Newman, A. (Clerk).

IPSWICH—
Calver, W. H. (Vice-Chairman).
Abbott, W. G.
Kent, Richard J. (Clerk).

MUTFORD AND LOTHINGLAND—
Mobbs, W., J.P. (Chairman).
Harris, Joseph.

RISBRIDGE—
Keeble, C. P. (Chairman).
M'Kechnie, Rev. A., J.P.

SAMFORD—
Murray, Col. K. D.
Thwaites, T.

YORKSHIRE DIVISION.

(62 Unions—17 represented.)

BARNSELY (WEST RIDING)—
Bray, C.
Goddard, E.
Bamforth, W. T. (Acting Clerk).

BRADFORD—
Bentham, F. H., J.P. (Chairman).
Binns, J. T.
Lund, B. C.
Powell, Sir Francis S., Bart., M.P.
Crowther, G. M. (Clerk).

DEWSBURY—
Blacker, G. (Vice-Chairman).
Chisholm, J. W.
Pickles, F. D.
Pickersgill, C. P. (Assistant Clerk).

ECCLESALL BIERLOW—
Maclaurin, J.
Whitworth, Ralph S.

HALIFAX—
Wood, Oates (Vice-Chairman).
Carter, J. B. (ex-Chairman).
Georgeson, John H.

HUDDERSFIELD—
Mallinson, T. (Chairman).
Taylor, T. (Vice-Chairman).
Siddon, Miss.
Rigby, E. A. (Clerk).

HUNSLET—
Knight, H. R. (Chairman).
Green, Edward (Vice-Chairman).
Mee, F. W. (Clerk).

KINGSTON-UPON-HULL—
Slater, W. D. (Governor and Chair-
man).
Wheatley, W. (Deputy - Governor,
Vice-Chairman).
Winter, Robert H. (Clerk).

LEEDS—
Bradley, J. (Vice-Chairman).
Corker, A.
Ford, James H. (Clerk).

NORTH BIERLEY—
Mortimer, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
Poynton, Rev. J. (Junior Vice-Chair-
man).
Helmsley, J. E. (Clerk).

SCULCOATES—
Savege, J., M.D. (Chairman).
Elvin, J. P. (Vice-Chairman).

SHEFFIELD—
Foster, T.
Payling, G.
Booker, A. E. (Clerk).

ROTHERHAM—
Craik, Henry
Heminslen, J.
Schonbut, Alderman F.
Wilson, C. B.
Goodinson, H. N. (Clerk).

YORK (O.R.)—
Russell, J. J. (Chairman).
Sykes, George (Clerk).

BISHOPTHORPE (O.R.)—
Wilkinson, Colonel G. Eason, D.S.O.
(Chairman).

SKIPTON—
Slingsby, J. A., J.P. (Chairman).
Wilson, F. J., C.C. (Vice-Chairman).

MIDDLESBROUGH—
Webb, J. (Chairman).
Huggins, R. W.
Dales, J. J. (Clerk).

NORTHERN DIVISION.
(39 Unions—8 represented.)

Northumberland.
(12 Unions—1 represented.)

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE—
Stableforth, C. T. (Chairman).
Davidson, J.
Atkinson, James (Clerk).

Durham.
(15 Unions—6 represented.)

AUCKLAND—
Kellett, M. H. (Chairman).
Adams, S. (Clerk).

DARLINGTON—
Feetham, John, J.P. (Chairman).
Leach, C. H., J.P. (Clerk).

GATESHEAD—
Affleck, Robert, J.P. (Chairman).
Swindle, Jackson.
Craighill, George, J.P. (Clerk).

SOUTH SHIELDS—
Batey J., J.P. (Chairman).
Cordiner, G.
Drury, G.
Coulson, Mrs.
Coulson, J. W. (Clerk).

STOCKTON—
Hudson, H. W. (Vice-Chairman).
Forster, John.
Watson, F. B. (Clerk).

SUNDERLAND—
Thompson, C. E. (Chairman).
Powley, Robt.
Thompson, Robt. (Clerk).

Westmorland.

(3 Unions—1 represented.)

KENDAL—
Cropper, The Hon. Mrs.

**NORTH-WESTERN
DIVISION.**

(41 Unions—25 represented.)

Cheshire.

(11 Unions—4 represented.)

BIRKENHEAD—
Evans, John.
Metge, W. H.
Carter, John (Clerk).

BUCKLOW—
Cort, Rev. J. P. (Chairman).
Bellamy, James.
Leigh, George (Clerk).

RUNCORN—
Linaker, C. E., Jun.
Morris, W. M.
Ashton, G. F. (Clerk).

WIRRAL—
Fryer, Wm.
Hodgson, Mrs E.

Lancashire.

(30 Unions—21 represented.)

ASHTON-UNDER-LYNE—
Messenger, Rev. F. (Chairman).
Hulse, J. T.
Partington, G. H. (Clerk).

BARROW-IN-FURNESS—
Barrie, A. (Vice-Chairman).
Cannon, John.
Taylor, F. W. (Asst. Clerk).

BARTON-UPON-IRWELL—
Brown, G. H.
Yates, H.
Whitworth, J. W. (Clerk).

BOLTON—
Cunliffe, R. H. (Chairman).
Knott, Percy (Vice-Chairman).
Cooper, H. I. (Clerk).

BURNLEY—

Carr, Edward, J. P. (Vice-Chairman).
Horn, J. S., J. P. (Clerk).

BURY—

Lingfield, Rev. R. P. (Chairman).
Isherwood, James (Clerk).

CHORLTON—

Sarjeant, Joseph W. (Chairman).
Macfarlane, G.
Rhodes, Dr.
Bloomfield, David S. (Clerk).

LEIGH—

Karfoot, Rev. W.

LIVERPOOL—

Kelly, T. (Chairman).
Hagger, H. G. (Clerk).

MANCHESTER—

Russell, G. H.
Williams, R. H.
Macdonald, James (Clerk).

OLDHAM—

Adamson, Thomas (Chairman).
Lees, Thomas (Vice-Chairman).
Quarmby, Horace A. (Clerk).

HASLINDEN—

Tomlinson, Henry (Chairman).
Sinkinson, J. H. (Clerk).

PRESCOT—

Welsby, Geo. H. (Chairman).
Hallas, G. H.
Mann, A. F. (Clerk).

PRESTWICH—

Sassen, Rev. W. (Chairman).
Ashcroft, W. T. (Vice-Chairman).
Ogden, Edward W. (Clerk).

ROCHDALE—

Purdy, R. (Chairman).
Leonard, F. J.
Leach, R. A. (Clerk).

SALFORD—

Byrne, J. P.
Gelder, Robt. D.
Townson, F. (Clerk).

TOXTETH PARK—

Jones, Wm (Chairman).
Woodhall, W. E.
James, R. Alber (Clerk),

WARRINGTON—

Billinge, Jacob (Chairman).
Hickman, Wm. (Vice-Chairman).
Sutton, J. C. (Clerk).

WEST DERBY—

Baker, J. W. (Chairman).
Cain, Benjamin (Vice-Chairman).
Clearer, Harris P. (Clerk)

WIGAN—

Fairhurst Wm. (Chairman).
Taylor, John (Vice-Chairman).
Johnson, Mrs.
Hennessy, Mrs.

ULVERSTON—

Midgley, J. H., B.Sc.
Dean, C. W. (Clerk).

SOUTH-WESTERN DIVISION.

(80 Unions—5 represented.)

Devon.

(20 Unions—1 represented.)

ST THOMAS—

Somerset.

(17 Unions—2 represented.)

KEYNSHAM—

Nurse, Robt. F. (Chairman).
Martin, Charles (Clerk).

WELLINGTON—

Fox, Miss Anna P.
Price, W. Sydney (Clerk).

Wiltshire.

(17 Unions—2 represented.)

SALISBURY—

Baker, Frank.
Davis, G. H.

WILTON—

Naish, Miss R. V.
Rawlence, Miss Kathleen.
Wilson, G. M. (Clerk),

WALES AND MONMOUTH DIVISIONS.

(53 Unions—13 represented.)

NEWPORT—

Thomas, Ithel (Clerk).

BRIDGEND AND COWBRIDGE—

Howells, John.

Williams, Iltyd.

CARDIFF—

Beavan, F. J. (Chairman).

Jones, Wm.

Jones, Mrs Lester.

Harris, Arthur J. (Clerk).

PONTYPRIDD—

Mason, W. B.

PONTARDAWE—

James, David.

Lewis, Wyndham.

Parry, D. E.

SWANSEA—

Stevens, J. H.

LLANELLY—

Jenkins, R. C. (Vice-Chairman).

BUILTH—

Owen, Rev. David.

CRICKHOWEL—

HOLYWELL—

Hughes, Daniel.

Oliver, Rev. David, D.D.

Roberts, P. Harding (Clerk).

HAWARDEN—

Millington, J. (Vice-Chairman).

WREXHAM—

Edwards, Joseph.

Jones, Thomas.

FESTINIOG—

THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF POOR LAW CONFERENCES was represented by the *Chairman*, Dr J. Milson Rhodes; *Hon. Treasurer*, Mr W. Vallance; *Hon. Sec.*, Sir William Chance, Bart., J.P.; *Secretary*, Mr W. G. Lewis (Barrister-at-Law); and the following

Elected Representatives:—

Metropolitan and South-Eastern Districts—Miss Brodie-Hall, *Guardian*, Eastbourne; Rev. P. S. G. Probert, *Chairman*, Fulham; and Mr H. G. Willink, Bradfield.

South Midland District—Colonel Gerard Clark, *Guardian*, Brentford (District *Hon. Sec.*); Sir Edmund Verney, Bart., *Guardian*, Buckingham.

Eastern District—Rev. J. F. Darrell, *Guardian*, Hoxne.

South-Western District—Mr A. G. Ferrers Howell, Exeter (District *Hon. Sec.*).

West Midland District—Mr G. E. Lloyd Baker, J.P., *Chairman*, Wheatenhurst (District *Hon. Sec.*); Mr F. W. B. Cripps, *Vice-Chairman*, Cirencester; and Mr W. H. Pritchard, J.P., *Chairman*, Wolverhampton.

North Midland District—Mr Thomas Palmer, *Guardian*, Nottingham, and Mrs Pratt, *Guardian*, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

North-Western District—Mr H. J. Hagger, *Clerk*, Parish of Liverpool (District *Hon. Sec.*); Rev. T. Bridge, *Guardian*, Macclesfield; and Dr J. Milson Rhodes, J.P., *Guardian*, Chorlton.

Yorkshire District—Mr F. H. Benthall, J.P., *Chairman*, Bradford; Mr S. J. Gower, *Chairman*, Kingston-upon-Hull; and Miss Siddon, *Guardian*, Huddersfield.

Northern District—Mr George Craighill, J.P., *Clerk*, Gateshead Union; Hon. Mrs Cropper, *Guardian*, Kendal; and Mr C. T. Stableforth, *Chairman*, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

South Wales District—Mr F. J. Beavan, *Guardian*, Cardiff.

North Wales District—Mr P. Harding Roberts, *Clerk*, Holywell Union (District *Hon. Sec.*)

Co-opted Members:—

Sir William Bousfield; Mr Jenner-Fust, *late General Inspector*, Local Government Board; Mr R. A. Leach, *Clerk*, Rochdale Union; Hon. F. Strutt, *Guardian*, Belper (*Hon. Sec.*, North Midland District); and Mr A. F. Vulliamy, Ipswich (*Hon. Sec.*, Eastern District).

VISITORS.

Dr Macnamara, M.P. (Parliamentary Secretary L.G.B.).
Mr Philip H. Bagenal, L.G.B.
Dr Downes, L.G.B.
Mrs Arthur Downes.
W. P. Elias, L.G.B.
Miss B. Walton Evans, L.G.B.
Mr Baldwin Fleming, L.G.B.
Mr J. L. Thompson, L.G.B.
Mr F. L. Turner, L.G.B.
Mrs F. L. Turner.
Hugh R. Williams, L.G.B.
Mr G. A. F. Hervey, L.G.B.
Mr A. B. Lowry, L.G.B.
Miss Mason, L.G.B.
Mr J. S. Oxley, L.G.B.

Miss G. R. Egerton (Robertsbridge).
Miss Faithfull (Lambeth Palace).
Mr V. A. Hillyer.
Miss Vera Lindsay.
Miss Rosalind Paget.
Dr E. Pechey Phipson.
Mr T. Glover, M.P. (Prescot).
Dr Edw. C. Seaton (M.O.H., Surrey).
Mrs W. N. Shaw (Women's Local Government Society).
Capt. E. M. Showers (Chief-Constable of Essex).
Mrs Sydney Skinner (Women's Local Government Society).
Mrs A. G. Townsend.

TUESDAY, 19TH FEBRUARY.

The LORD MAYOR, in welcoming the delegates, said—Mr Walter Long, ladies and gentlemen, it gives me very great pleasure to welcome you all here to-day in this Council Chamber. The subjects which you are going to discuss are of great importance to the whole country, and many of you have come long distances in order to take part in their discussion. You have to discuss the subject of Vagrancy, which is indeed an important subject, and also the question of the increasing burden of the poor's rates. That is a matter which touches us all very nearly, and you will, I am sure, do your best to see if we cannot in some way decrease those poor's rates. Ladies and gentlemen, you may have heard that I am taking part in a subject which I consider of great importance in this Metropolis, that is the question of the Crippled Children. (Cheers.) I have for many years known this subject intimately, and I am aware that there are at least ten thousand poor crippled children in London other than those who are maintained in any institution or home; and I believe from the evidence that the bulk of that crippledom is to be attributed

to the terrible disease of tuberculosis. It is not a subject which you are going to discuss to-day, but I venture to call attention to it because I think it is a subject of great importance. I am endeavouring in my position of Lord Mayor to use my influence in some way to help these poor little afflicted creatures. Still anything I can do is but a drop in the ocean, and it behoves all of us to do what we can to stamp out this terrible disease of tuberculosis. (Applause.) I now have the pleasure to declare the Conference open.

The Right Hon. WALTER H. LONG, M.P., said his first duty was an easy and agreeable one—to propose a hearty vote of thanks to the Lord Mayor for his hospitality in allowing them to assemble in that beautiful chamber, and for the great honour his Lordship had conferred upon them in opening their proceedings, and being present in person, showing by sympathetic language the interest he took in the varied subjects the Conference would be called upon to consider. It was a happy omen for their debates that the Lord Mayor should have been able to tell them, what indeed they already knew, that in his year of office in his historic position—which they were confident his Lordship would fill with credit to the City, advantage to the country, and distinction to himself—he had practically approached a question which was near to the hearts of all those connected with Poor Law administration, viz., the question to which in his brief address he had alluded. They all wished his Lordship success in the work he had undertaken. It was not too much to say that anything any of them could do, however small it might be, to aid his Lordship in his work of charity and benevolence would be done with all their hearts and all their energies. It was not for him to dwell upon the Lord Mayor's claims upon their goodwill. Those claims spoke for themselves, and in according him the formal expression of thanks from the Conference they also extended to him an assurance of their sympathy in the heavy and onerous duties he was called upon to perform, and they desired to express the conviction that he would bring to the discharge of those duties untiring industry, unfailing energy, and conspicuous ability, and that he would be supported by the goodwill of all the citizens of London, and by the hearty accord of all outside the City who had been accustomed from time immemorial to look to the City for a lead and guidance in many of the great social questions of the day. (Applause.)

Dr J. M. RHODES (Chairman of the Central Committee) seconded the motion, and desired to express the thanks of all the Guardians of England and Wales for the great services his Lordship had rendered to cripple children throughout the country. The Conference was not going to discuss the question of crippled children from the physical point of view, but they would have to discuss the morally crippled children—the children of the tramps. (Hear, hear.) He thought that the Lord Mayor would agree with him when he said that something must be done to remove the disgrace that at present blots our escutcheon in allowing the children of tramps to be dragged about

the country. He hoped they would have the pleasure of seeing Sir William Treloar at future Conferences, but particularly on this occasion he desired, on behalf of Boards of Guardians, to thank his Lordship for the splendid service rendered to our cripple children. (Cheers.)

The motion having been carried by acclamation,

The LORD MAYOR formally thanked the Conference for the vote of thanks.

LETTERS OF REGRET.

Sir WM. CHANCE read letters regretting their inability to attend the Conference from Sir Samuel Provis, Miss Ina Stansfeld (Local Government Board Inspector), Sir J. T. Hibbert (who expressed his pleasure that the Conference had secured a good Chairman, and the hope that the result of the proceedings would be to strengthen and extend a firm system of Poor Law administration), and Miss Sophia Lonsdale.

REPORT OF THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE.

Sir WM. CHANCE then read the Report of the Committee as follows:—

The Committee are very glad to note the increasing interest which is taken by Boards of Guardians in the District Conferences. Ten have been held this year, and have all been exceedingly well attended. The following table may be of interest, showing how many Unions out of the total number of Unions in each District have supported their respective Conferences:—

West Midland	-	-	35	out of	82
South Wales	-	-	18	" "	33
Northern	-	-	17	" "	39
North Wales	-	-	17	" "	20
North-Western	-	-	39	" "	41
South-Western	-	-	59	" "	79
North Midland	-	-	27	" "	45
Yorkshire	-	-	26	" "	62
South-Eastern	-	-	52	" "	127
South Midland	-	-	15	" "	64
TOTAL -			305	" "	592

An unfortunate misunderstanding prevented the Eastern Conference from being held as usual. The extraordinarily good representation at the North-Western and North Wales Conferences will be noted, and reflect the greatest credit upon their respective Hon. Secretaries. It is the custom now for most of the District Conferences to occupy two days, and this has no doubt the effect of securing a better attendance than a one-day Conference. Indeed, the two

Conferences which have the smallest attendance, Yorkshire and South Midland, only occupied one day. The fact is that where the Unions are scattered over a very large area, with difficult railway communication, it is quite impossible for Guardians to get to the Conference and home again in the same day. For example, the marked success of the North Wales and South-Western Conferences with such extended areas could not possibly be attained by a one day's Conference only.

The Committee are under a deep debt of gratitude to the Hon. Secretaries of the different Conferences for the trouble and pains which they one and all take to make them a success. They much regret the retirement of Mr J. E. Helmsley (Clerk of the North Bierley Board of Guardians) from his position of Hon. Secretary to the Yorkshire Conference, and take this opportunity to record their appreciation of his valuable services and of the efficient manner in which he has performed his duties.

The subjects which have engaged the attention of District Conferences during the past year have been as usual very varied, and most useful and instructive papers have been forthcoming. The question of Vagrancy, as might naturally be expected, owing to the appearance of the Report of the Departmental Committee last spring, has been discussed at eight of the Conferences. At four of these, formal resolutions on the subject were passed—two in favour of the transfer of the vagrant from the control of the Guardians to that of the Police (West Midland and South-Western) and two against (Northern and North-Western). At the other four Conferences (North Midland, Yorkshire, South Midland, and South-Eastern), no division was taken, so that the opinion of Guardians on the main proposal of the Committee appears to be so far undetermined.

The question of the detention of feeble-minded mothers for their own protection and that of the general public has been for some time engaging the attention of Boards of Guardians, and most useful contributions to its elucidation were made at the West Midland, North Wales, and South-Western Conferences. The Report of the Royal Commission upon the whole question of the treatment of the mentally defective may be expected before the middle of this year, and the Committee trust that it may result in useful legislation for the better protection of this unfortunate section of the community.

The Committee deeply regret the loss, by death, of two of their members during the year. One of them, Canon Hignett, for many years a representative of the North-Western District, had been for a long while in very indifferent health and was advanced in years. (His memoir and portrait will be published with the official report of this Conference.) The other, Mr J. L. P. Barber, of Burton-on-Trent—a comparatively young man—died suddenly from heart disease, and his full life, devoted as it was to the public good, came to a tragic end on Monday, 3rd December, at the moment that he reached home during the luncheon interval of a meeting of the British and

Foreign Bible Society. Mr Barber was Chairman of the Burton-on-Trent Board of Guardians and a County Magistrate, and had been an Alderman of the Derbyshire County Council. He was also active in religious and other works, and promoted the economic welfare of his district, and it may truly be said of him that he devoted his life to doing good.

The changes on the Committee during the year are as follows :—

District.	New Member.	In place of
West Midland	Mr W. H. Pritchard (Wolverhampton)	Mr H. J. Sayer (new Lord Mayor of Birmingham).
South Midland	Sir Edmund Verney, Bart.	Rev. T. Hodgson (St Neots).
North Midland	Mrs Pratt (Ashby-de-la-Zouch)	Alderman Southwood (Grimsby).
South Wales -	Mr J. W. Johnston (Swansea)	Rev. Dr J. Gomer Lewis (Swansea).
South-Western	Sir C. Thos. Dyke Acland, Bart. (Williton)	Mr Beauchamp - Beauchamp (Redruth).
North-Western	Rev. Thomas Bridge (Macclesfield)	The late Canon Hignett.
Yorkshire - -	Miss Siddon (Huddersfield)	Mr Eli Whitwam (of the same Board).

The Committee have co-opted Mr Jenner-Fust (lately one of the Inspectors of the Local Government Board) to fill the vacancy caused by the retirement of the Rev. Canon Bury.

Among the members of the Committee who have been honoured during the year by having their names placed on the Commission of the Peace are the Chairman, Dr Rhodes (for the County of Lancaster), and Mr George Craighill (for the County of Durham), Mr Bentham (City of Bradford), and Mr Pritchard (Wolverhampton).

The Committee have circulated to Boards of Guardians a copy of a remarkable address delivered at the last South-Eastern Poor Law Conference by Mr Edmond Wodehouse, C.B., which, coming from one who has had such a wide experience of Poor Law administration, will no doubt receive their serious consideration, whether or not they may agree with everything he says.

A statement of the accounts of the Central Conference for the year ended 30th April 1906 was duly audited and sent to all Boards of Guardians. It showed that at the last Central Conference 220 Unions paid for admission, as compared with a similar number in 1905, and 198 in 1904. The balance at the bank was £50. 7s. 3d., as compared with £50. 6s. at the close of the year ending 30th April 1905.

The delegates to the Central Poor Law Conference in 1904 visited the training ship "Exmouth" at Grays, and commemorated the event by presenting a silver cup for competition between the boys.

A new vessel having been provided for the important work carried on by the Metropolitan Asylums Board, the Guardians attending the Central Conference in February last were afforded an opportunity of seeing the improved conditions under which Captain Colmore and his assistants train Poor Law boys for the sea. Filled with admiration of all that they saw aboard, the visitors subscribed a sum of just over £19, which was expended upon the purchase of a challenge shield. This has now been placed in the ship to remind the boys of the interest taken in them by the Poor Law Guardians of the country and to stimulate them to friendly rivalry of a kind that must tend to have the best possible influence upon them. (See Appendix I., p. 765.)

The Committee repeat their grateful thanks to the Lord Mayor and Corporation of the City of London for allowing the Conference to meet in the Council Chamber, which forms a fitting annexe to the historic hall in which so many notable scenes have been enacted, not the least of them being the annual Christmas gathering of crippled children for a happy evening, under the auspices of Sir Wm. Treloar, who has welcomed the Conference to-day.

They may congratulate the Conference on having secured the services of the Right Hon. Walter H. Long, M.P., as their President this year. He has for so long played a prominent part in public affairs that it is unnecessary to do more than to remind the Conference that, as a past President of the Local Government Board, he is specially qualified to preside at this great Conference of the Guardians and Clerks of England and Wales.

It may be of interest to add that at the present Conference there are 226 subscribing Unions, this being a record attendance.

Dr RHODES formally moved the reception and adoption of the report, and drew attention to the last paragraph but one congratulating the Conference on having secured Mr Walter Long as President. (Applause.)

Mr F. J. BEAVAN seconded, and the motion was agreed to.

The PRESIDENT stated that a letter from the Coventry Board of Guardians on the subject of the number of papers read at the annual conferences would stand referred to the Central Committee.

PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS.

The PRESIDENT, who was received with loud applause, then addressed the Conference. He said—Ladies and gentlemen, it now becomes my duty to say a few words to you in opening this Conference. I hope you will allow me in the first place to say that I accepted the honourable position in which I find myself with great reluctance and misgiving, and not without begging those who did me the honour to ask me to reconsider the proposition they had made. But there is one remark in your Committee's report which I am afraid is undoubtedly true, and that is that I have for a very long time taken

a part in public affairs, and at all events as a result of that experience I have learnt one lesson, if no other. That is, that it is not for individuals to ask themselves how far they are suited for the posts for which they are selected by others, but it is for them if they are asked to perform a particular duty to do their best to perform it, and to do what they can to contribute to the object which all concerned have in view. I shall not trespass on your time very long, and certainly I shall not attempt to lay down any definite ideas with a view to guiding your debates. I shall make a passing reference to one or two subjects in which I have myself taken a very keen interest, and I will commence, if you will allow me, by expressing the great gratification I felt at learning from the report read a minute ago that you had co-opted my old friend Mr Jenner-Fust as a member of your body. (Hear, hear.) I congratulate him upon this proof of the satisfaction felt by all concerned at the way in which he has discharged his responsible duties during many years, and I congratulate this Conference upon having the great advantage of his wisdom, his prudence, and his mature experience in the consideration of the various problems that must from time to time come before them. I have also to congratulate you upon a very significant fact, which is, that this is the largest Conference that has ever yet assembled in connection with the Central Poor Law Conferences. I regret very much that an almost inevitable consequence of that fact should be the physical discomfort to which attention has already been drawn by a member of the Conference. All I can plead on behalf of those who are responsible for our arrangements is that it is extremely difficult to forecast what will be the actual demands in the shape of accommodation, and it is also extremely difficult to secure a building which is adequate in size for those who will occupy it and at the same time be suitable for the purpose of discussion, because if it is too big it is obvious that debate becomes almost an impossibility. Therefore, all I can do is to plead for a generous consideration on the part of those who may through these causes be temporarily discommoded. Ladies and gentlemen, I have often said in public—indeed, it is a mere commonplace—that I believe insufficient attention is given by the public, and insufficient credit is given by the public, to the great Department with which I was myself connected for some years at the Local Government Board, and the various local bodies which operate in connection with it. We are accustomed—more accustomed to-day than we used to be—to talk about social legislation, and in the particular arena where I am called upon to take a small part, social legislation finds a very ready acceptance on the part of those who are anxious to represent their fellow-countrymen in Parliament; and it follows almost inevitably from this that there is a competition as to the form that social legislation shall take, which while it is no doubt on general grounds healthy, as competition almost always must be—because it stimulates interest and leads people to try and find various solutions of the different

problems—it also exposes us to the risk that some of those proposed remedies may rest on insecure foundations, and may be the result of rather too hasty attempts to settle difficulties than of the mature consideration of the reasons which lead to those difficulties and the best ways of removing them. Now, ladies and gentlemen, I believe that in all our Government Departments, in all our branches of public work, there is no Department and no work so closely bound up with the future prosperity of the country as a whole as is the administration of the Local Government Board and the work done by the Boards of Guardians throughout the country. (Cheers.) It is a commonplace to say that it is desirable for Imperial reasons to provide a sufficient and efficient Navy and Army, but if those who are responsible for the public health of the country, if those who are responsible for the conditions in which the children of the country are growing up to be men and women, are neglectful of their duties, those who toil for the Navy and the Army will toil in vain, because the material will not be there to provide the healthy strong men out of whom alone you can hope to frame an efficient Navy and Army. Therefore, it is to the administrators of the Poor Law system to whom we must really look to maintain not only the first or the second, but both lines of defence for our great country. I rejoice to think that as time has gone on there has been an increasing interest taken in those great questions, and the fact to which I have already alluded—that this is the largest Conference that has ever been held in connection with Poor Law administration—shows how stronger is growing the hold of the work with which you are connected upon those who perform it; and the fact that your Conference is so widely followed throughout the country proves that the general interest taken by the community is no less than that taken by yourselves. Now there are one or two subjects that you are going to be asked to consider, of which Vagrancy is probably the most interesting and probably not the least difficult. But may I say a word before I pass to that—it will be a very brief one—in reference to the general question of Poor Law administration. I spent eleven very pleasant, and to me very instructive and agreeable years of my official life inside the Local Government Board as Parliamentary Secretary, and subsequently as President, and I do not hesitate to say that the most valuable lessons I have learnt in my public life were learnt during those eleven years in that department, and in the society of men, able men—abler there were not in the public service—who had given the best years of their lives to the consideration of these great social problems. I cordially endorse what has been already referred to in the report of your Committee, that in whatever changes we may make from time to time in the administration of our laws and in the general conduct of the Poor Law system, we should be criminal if we were to do anything which tended to weaken an administration, the strength of which has brought so much good and so much happiness to the people of the country. I do not believe it is possible for anybody

who merely gathers his experience from his everyday knowledge of what is going on to realise the changes that have taken place in this country since the new Poor Law was established. Anybody who cares to read those long reports of the Commission which led up to the establishment of the new Poor Law system will be struck with the hideous condition of things which existed before, and they must be equally struck with the remarkable improvement which has followed during recent years. Now I do not pretend for a moment, it would be idle to do so, that that improvement is the result merely of a stronger, a better, and what I venture to call a more humane system of Poor Law administration. It is due, no doubt, to many other causes, but those whom I am addressing, and who are familiar with the facts and figures bearing on this question, know perfectly well that in wisely and well-administered Unions you will find not merely lower statistics in regard to pauperism—because that is a point on which I lay very little stress indeed—but you will find the general condition of those who labour by their hands is better, more self-reliant, more independent than it is in cases where the system of administration is slack and is less prudently carried on. (Hear, hear.) If that is correct, and I believe it to be correct—I believe it to be the almost uncontested experience of those who have been connected with Poor Law administration—it surely forms in itself a strong tribute, and an almost unanswerable argument in support of that system of administration which has now become almost universal, certainly very general. Now I hold that we should do nothing—unless we are to incur a charge of criminal neglect of our duties—which will have the result in any way of weakening this system of administration. It is idle for us to shut our eyes to the fact that as time goes on changes in Poor Law administration have to be made to bring them up to the spirit of the times, just as changes have to be made in other laws of the land; and the one central fact that I would with great respect ask you to bear in mind in all our discussions—I do not care what particular subject the discussion may happen to be upon—is this, so long as human nature is what it is, and so long as it is composed of the constituents which now compose it, there must be, I fear, at all events until the Millennium comes, from time to time a constant supply, we hope a decreasing one, but a constant supply of paupers. Physical weakness, vice, idleness, these are the materials which I am afraid will be always present with us to some extent, though I earnestly hope to a decreasing extent; these are the materials out of which pauperism must be manufactured, and they are, if I may so venture to describe them, the natural causes which lead to pauperism. But, on the other hand, we are going to ask ourselves whether it is not the case, and has not been the case, that to these natural causes there have from time to time been added others which have led to the manufacture of pauperism out of material which was not intended for that purpose, and which if it had been properly used would have led to the creation of, not paupers, but to the build-

ing up of strong men and women to take their part in the world to-day? And it is, I believe, in a wise discrimination between these two different kinds of people that you have to deal with, that you will find in the end the wisest and most prudent amendment of your Poor Law system. Now in recent years there have been many who have advocated what is called a more generous administration of the Poor Law. Well, ladies and gentlemen, nobody, however keen he may be in Poor Law administration, however convinced he may be by his training and his experience and his plain knowledge that suggestions of that kind unless very carefully elaborated are more dangerous than beneficial—nobody can condemn those who make them, because they spring from two causes, two sources; first, an intimate personal knowledge of the suffering of others, and secondly a profound pity for those who are called upon to spend their lives in miserable circumstances and conditions; and therefore, though we may be forced to criticise, though we may sometimes even feel convinced that they are wrong in their suggestions, we will not, I think, if we are wise men and women, condemn them as absurd in themselves and unworthy of support, and look upon those who make them as cranks who come forward with impracticable suggestions. Rather let us welcome them into our discussions, showing them that we are with them in the desire they have, which is not merely a desire to put a pauper into a better room, to give him better conditions of indoor or outdoor relief, but to so frame your Poor Law that those who are victims of misfortune shall not be unduly penalised while to everybody else shall be given an incentive to struggle on, however bitter the adversity may be, in order to avoid disabilities and the shame which follows from resort to the Workhouse. Now in the administration of the Poor Laws, we know that in our great towns the most marvellous improvement has taken place, and it is a remarkable fact that in some of the larger towns where the system is found in its most advanced and most reformed character, the cost to which your attention is going to be drawn by a resolution to be moved to-morrow, is not as great as it is in districts where the administration is not so well carried out, and is not so satisfactory for the paupers themselves. I hope that in one of your discussions, possibly on the question of rates, some member of the Conference may see fit to consider whether the time has not come when some change must be made in the system of the Poor Law, not in the form of administration, but in the areas through which administration is delivered. (Hear, hear.) It was my lot, as it has been the lot of every President of the Local Government Board, to have brought before me from time to time cases in the country where the Workhouses were manifestly altogether unsuitable for the purpose for which they exist, where they could not offer decent accommodation for those who have to be accommodated, and where it is necessary to maintain a working staff which is altogether superfluous for the work which has

to be done. Why is this? This is because you have still got some Poor Law areas so small in themselves, so poor in their rateable value, that it is impossible for any President of the Local Government Board to go down and say you must do this or that, because it can be shown by the Guardians that the cost of that work would be ruinous to the Union and could not possibly be borne by the ratepayer. It is no good complaining of the heavy burden of the rates. It is no good to complain that nothing is done of a progressive character, until you have satisfied yourself first that the means that the State provides for the work are adequate and sufficient for the purpose. (Hear, hear.) When I was at the Local Government Board I was called upon to deal with the subject, which I am only touching briefly on for two reasons; in the first place, it does not form part of your agenda, and in the second place, because I know from past experience that it leads to considerable trouble to those who administer the Poor Law. I see present in this great gathering many gentlemen whose friendship I have had the honour to enjoy while I have been connected with the Poor Law, who I know would be ready and more able to severely criticise some of the remarks I might make. I know in dealing with what is called the Unemployed Question there is a sharp division of opinion amongst those who are most experienced in the administration of the Poor Laws. I know that there are those who say that any attempt to deal with this question by administration is sure to have the effect of weakening Poor Law administration. Now, ladies and gentlemen, if I had thought that I would never have made myself responsible for any proposals connected with this most thorny subject. On the contrary, I believe that unless we face this fact and realise that in certain periods when the demand for labour is not so great, we under our old system proceed at once to manufacture pauperism out of the materials to which I was referring just now, which were never intended for the manufacture of pauperism, and we add to the list of those who, once on the slippery incline which leads to pauperism and to the Workhouse, are never able to recover themselves or maintain that moral and physical fibre without which they cannot regenerate themselves and become self-supporting members of the community. (Cheers.) I am dead against, as I say, any foolish relaxation of your principles, but I ask the men and women who are connected with Poor Law administration to face these facts in our national life, and to realise what they are, and to ask themselves whether it is not desirable that something should be done to prevent an addition to the number of paupers which might be avoided if it were possible to deal with this section of the community in a different way. To do this effectively you must have strict honest administration, you must have a complete system of discrimination. Take the honest working men who are tramping the country in search of work. Is there anybody in this gathering who has taken the smallest trouble to examine this question, who has not come across hundreds of such

men, who in times of unemployment have tramped the country north and south, east and west, worn out in body, with their clothing in rags, wives and children at home crying for the food they cannot give them? Are those men to be told there is the Workhouse? Do you think that means a good system of administration? Do you think that will form a secure basis upon which your Poor Law system can rest? Do you think that is the way to build up a strong and self-reliant nation? On the other hand, you have to deal with the men—I am sorry to say there are many of them—who take advantage of that condition of things, who live perpetually in that state of life, and who, when the time of stress comes and the honest man is about foodless and workless, take the opportunity to press their claims, and in the confusion of the heavy pressure which follows from bad times it is too often the case that the clamorous applicant who has nothing to justify his demands, gets the relief, which to him is a curse; whereas if it were given in a proper form to the well-behaved, deserving man, temporarily stranded, it would save him and his, and keep them honest and self-supporting members of the community. (Cheers.) Now, ladies and gentlemen, with regard to the question of vagrancy, which is closely akin to the subject I have already raised, I am very glad to know that a debate is to be initiated directly by my right honourable friend Mr Wharton, who, I am happy to say, was for a long time my colleague in the House of Commons. Mr Wharton was good enough to accept the position of Chairman of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy which was appointed whilst I was at the Local Government Board, and he will read a paper on that most difficult subject. It is closely connected with the one I have ventured to touch upon, because a great many of those vagrants are, as you know, I won't say members of the wastrel class—but they are past masters in the art of wasting. They have brought the practice to a positive art. Let any one do what many of us in this chamber have done, go round the vagrant wards of this great Metropolis and see how many of those who seek refuge there in ordinary times require any assistance or advice as to where they have got to go or what they have got to do when they get inside. They know as well as you or I know the hotel we generally stay at, and when they leave they are quite ready to complain of the cook and the accommodation generally. (Laughter.) But, ladies and gentlemen, are we to be asked to continue this awful excrescence upon our social system without taking any strong or adequate measures to get rid of it? I say that the existence, and I am sorry to say the growing number of these vagrants in many parts of the country is a danger to our social system, a danger to our country, and calls for prompt and strong measures to deal with it. I won't anticipate the discussion which is going to take place this morning. I will only say that the real difficulty connected with any reform is the one of how to get uniformity of administration. If we could only solve that problem I do not think it matters so very much

into whose hands we put the work that has to be done ; but it is extremely difficult, having regard to the fact that the police force in England is a local force—in some of the bigger counties there are several different forces of police—to know how you are going to secure uniformity under them. You may find it in some other way, but find it you must if you are going to remove this most hideous evil from the midst of our society. Ladies and gentlemen, I have now only to apologise to you for the demands which I have made upon your patience and your indulgence—(no, no)—and to thank you, as I do, for the most generous way you have extended to me your hospitality by allowing me to address you as I have so imperfectly done. But whether you agree with what I have said or not, at all events I ask you to believe that my remarks have been prompted by the desire which prompts all of you, *i.e.*, that we may approach this question in a free and unbiassed spirit, with our eyes open to the real facts, not trying to hide these things from ourselves because they are ugly and distasteful and difficult. I am animated by the desire which fills you also to do something to build up on still stronger foundations the great people which we are—self-supporting, self-reliant, independent people—and to teach the lesson which it is the business of all Poor Law administrators to teach, that although competition in life is difficult, although the strain upon mind and body is sometimes almost insupportable, no man ought to have recourse to the Poor Law unless he has exhausted every possible means of maintaining himself and those dependent upon him—to avoid by every means in our power letting that idea gain ground which obtained before 1832, that recourse to the Poor Law is very much the same as going to a friend and asking him for help in times of difficulty. In the one case it is the voluntary act of a friend doing what he likes with his own, and in the other case it is the compulsory right of an individual to come upon his neighbours with the demand that they shall keep him if he cannot keep himself. That is a demand which should not be made unless it is absolutely and unavoidably necessary. In order to secure the acceptance of this strict view by those who labour with their hands you must take care to remove out of their way as far as possible any difficulties which are capable of being removed ; you must not approach this question with set ideas, and with a refusal to consider suggestions which at the moment may seem to be revolutionary. Come to the debates with open minds ready to consider and discuss all suggestions that may be made, and determine by the speeches that you make and by the votes that you give you are doing all you can to build up securely the foundations upon which our society rests. (Loud applause.)

The Right Hon. J. LLOYD WHARTON said that before reading his paper he would like to say one word with regard to the Committee whose report was the foundation of his remarks. He desired to thank the President for having associated him with a body of men who of all bodies he had served with at public inquiries—he believed

he had served on some fifteen or sixteen Commissions and Committees—he believed that was the last bit of public work he would be able to do—(no, no)—none had approached the subject before them with a more open mind and with greater capability of dealing with the problem. Not only so, but in Mr Turner they had a most able secretary. He was thankful to find that there had been a larger sale of the report of this Committee than of any other Blue-book for many years. (Applause.)

Mr WHARTON then read the following paper :—

THE VAGRANCY QUESTION.

By THE RIGHT HON. J. LLOYD WHARTON,

Chairman of the late Departmental Committee on Vagrancy.

IN the summer of 1904, my right honourable friend who occupies the chair at this meeting, invited me to act as Chairman of a Committee he was about to appoint to inquire into the subject of Vagrancy. The appointment of the Committee was due to the great increase in vagrancy which had occurred during the last few preceding years, and the growing conviction on the part of Guardians and others that the existing methods of dealing with vagrancy were unsatisfactory.

The Committee was finally appointed in July 1904, the reference to them being to inquire and report as to the law applicable to persons of the vagrant class, its administration, and any amendments in it or its administration which seemed necessary. The Inquiry was limited to England and Wales.

After more than eighteen months' work the Committee issued their Report in February 1906. The Report was favourably received by the press and the country at large. I am informed that an exceptionally large number of copies of the Report have been sold.

There were two main questions concerned in the Inquiry :—

- (1.) The suitability of the existing system of relief of vagrants in casual wards ; and
- (2.) The treatment of vagrant offenders.

The first question was the more important one to persons interested in Poor Law matters, and to this the Committee directed their first attention. They carefully observed the existing conditions of casual wards, and heard a large number of witnesses, and obtained other information, both officially and otherwise, and as the result found that the great blot on the present system was the want of uniformity. But this defect was a fatal one. Vagrants were treated differently at nearly every one of the six hundred casual wards in the country, the variations being in accommodation, detention, food, task of work, and indeed in every possible respect.

The Committee were driven to the conclusion that uniformity was absolutely necessary to any successful scheme, which, while it suitably relieved vagrants, did not attract or encourage them, but they found that it was useless to expect uniformity under the very varying system and practice of the several Boards of Guardians, and that there was practically no means of securing this uniformity from them.

The Committee saw that the casual wards must be continued, but that their management must be transferred to some other authority. Of all the possible authorities, they considered the police the most suitable and the most likely to secure uniformity, and they unanimously came to the conclusion that the police authorities, *i.e.*, the standing joint committee in counties and the watch committee in separate police boroughs, should take the place of the Guardians. This change would at once reduce the number of bodies controlling the casual wards to a third of the present number. The advantages of the proposed change, and the details of the working of the new system, are clearly set out in the Report. On this question the Committee started with an open mind, and it was only after they were persuaded by the evidence that they determined to recommend transfer to the police.

The Committee made their recommendation with no desire to affect the status of Boards of Guardians. Their view is that the care of the vagrant is outside, and interferes with, the proper functions of those bodies; and that he must be treated by an authority acting for a larger area than the Union. A very large body of Poor Law opinion has signified approval of the proposed transfer, and I believe most Guardians are pleased at the prospect of being relieved of the difficulty and responsibility of dealing with the vagrant. It is, of course, impossible for so complete a change to suit every one, but I am convinced that our scheme is the best means of solving the difficulty.

With regard to London, the Committee felt that the change of authority, *i.e.*, from Guardians to police, might be somewhat more difficult than in other counties and large towns, owing to the fact that the police are not as elsewhere under local control, and act for an area extending over several counties. But having in view the fact that, except in the matters of bathing, searching, and dietary, there is an even more pronounced lack of uniformity in the methods of dealing with the vagrants in the twenty-eight casual wards in the Metropolis than in the rest of England and Wales, and that the London vagrant as a class demands more strict supervision and treatment than elsewhere, we came, after very full consideration, to the conclusion that the duty of dealing with London vagrants could only be performed with success by that excellent force the Metropolitan police. They have at present to do with the London vagrant outside the walls of the casual ward, and we were convinced that the supervision and management of these wards by the same body is a matter of absolute necessity, if uniformity is to be secured.

Following on this main recommendation (transfer of control of wards) there is a smaller point dealt with by the Committee, but one to which I personally attach

much importance. I mean the provision of a mid-day meal for all vagrants who have left the casual wards in the morning. The hardship of the present system, under which the vagrant has no means of honestly coming by a meal between casual wards, is obvious to all ; it is a direct incentive to begging, and encourages roadside almsgiving. I believe that the proposals of the Committee on this point, coupled with the inauguration of the way-ticket system they suggest for *bona fide* work-seekers, will provide adequately for the needs of the wayfarer, and by removing the excuse for much of the begging will render vagrancy less attractive. I should say that the Committee were much helped in arriving at the conclusions on this point by the valuable experiments which have been made in the counties of Gloucester and Wiltshire.

I do not wish to occupy your time by alluding in detail to all the recommendations of the Committee affecting casual wards: their general aim is to secure uniformity of treatment and to prevent hardship. But I will now pass to the second of the main questions considered at the Inquiry, viz., the treatment of vagrant offenders.

This question, indeed, is of wider interest than the control of casual wards, and it is one in which I, as an old Chairman of Quarter Sessions, have had some experience.

There was one point on which all the witnesses who appeared before us were strikingly unanimous, and that was the uselessness of short sentences for vagrant offenders. The offences most generally committed by the vagrants are begging, sleeping-out, and insubordination in the casual wards, and the sentences given in these cases but rarely exceed fourteen days' imprisonment, and are usually less than a week.

Thus in 1904 the number of sentences for fourteen

days and under as compared with the total number of sentences of imprisonment for those offences were :—

	<i>Short Sentences.</i>		<i>Sentences of Imprisonment.</i>
Begging - -	13,831	out of a total of	16,626
Sleeping-out -	5,198	" "	6,219
Misbehaviour by paupers -	5,208	" "	6,972
Or in all -	<u>24,237</u>	" "	<u>29,817</u>

In 1905 the corresponding figures were :—

	<i>Short Sentences.</i>		<i>Sentences of Imprisonment.</i>
Begging - -	15,218	out of a total of	18,262
Sleeping-out -	5,883	" "	6,883
Misbehaviour by paupers -	4,338	" "	5,853
	<u>25,439</u>	" "	<u>30,998</u>

Our Inquiry showed that so far from a few days' imprisonment being of any use it was actually harmful. In many cases it was sought for by the vagrant as a means of obtaining rest on his way, and an offence was wilfully committed to procure a short period of imprisonment. In many cases, notably those of drunkards, the few days' detention simply serves to create in the prisoner a craving for drink, and he comes out worse than when he entered.

The statistics I have quoted show the huge proportion of short sentences given in vagrancy cases, and it is easy to understand that the constant entrance and discharge of these short-sentence men disorganises the arrangements in the local prisons, and renders good work difficult.

To meet these points the Committee make a simple suggestion. Let there be no imprisonment for a vagrancy offence for less than a fortnight; if the magistrate does not think the man deserving of this sentence he can either discharge him at once or

sentence him to one day's imprisonment, which would mean in fact discharge on the rising of the Court. But in the latter case the conviction would be recorded, and would form the basis of more serious treatment on subsequent convictions.

The Vagrancy Act does provide longer punishments for the idle and disorderly person, the rogue and vagabond, and the incorrigible rogue, but it is comparatively rarely that advantage is taken by the justices of the powers given. There is a general sympathy felt for the poor fellow who comes before the Bench, as his previous convictions in other places are not known, and it is felt also that the law makes no proper provision for him. The Committee's suggestion would secure uniform and fair treatment for all. The system of finger-printing would enable each offender to be traced, and his previous convictions ascertained.

After three convictions for a vagrancy offence within a period of twelve months, we suggest that the man should be deemed to be an "habitual vagrant," and should be liable to be sent on to Quarter Sessions, and be by them sentenced either to imprisonment not exceeding twelve months, as an incorrigible rogue now is, or to detention in a labour colony for a period from six months to three years.

This brings me to a most important point relating to the treatment of vagrant offenders. Evidence, statistics, and experience all show that prison is no deterrent to the vagrant offender, nor does it reform him. The conditions there indeed are in many respects better than in the casual ward, and certainly better than those he is accustomed to in his ordinary life. I have referred to the uselessness of the short sentence, but even the longer sentence of imprisonment does very little good. The Committee found themselves in entire agreement with the Prison Commissioners in the view that prison was an unsuitable place for the treatment of these men,

and therefore they recommend the experiment of labour colonies. To try to make prison a suitable place for vagrant offenders would be to reverse the settled policy of recent years with regard to prisons.

The Committee made exhaustive inquiries into the various systems of labour colonies in force here and in other countries, and the results are shown in the Report. They do not accept the views of some that reformation of character would necessarily follow detention in such institutions, but they do believe that more good will result than from the present system. The voluntary colony from which an inmate can discharge himself when he likes would be useless for this class ; there must be power of detention.

The great point in the compulsory labour colony would be the power to compel work from the inmates. The man who declined to work or behaved badly would only receive a bare subsistence ; but there would be every encouragement in the shape of better food, extra privileges, and money rewards for the man who worked well. Then, again, a longer period of detention would be possible than in prisons. Altogether the labour colony should prove a strong means of helping the inmates and a deterrent to potential entrants.

The Committee felt it desirable that the experiment should be tried, if possible, first by private philanthropic or religious bodies in order to get more reformatory influences, but they suggested that county authorities might in certain cases provide labour colonies. The cost would be borne partly by the locality and partly by the State. This system is adopted as regards the Belgian colony at Merxplas.

The colonies would have to be under State inspection, and, no doubt, a State labour colony would be necessary for specially bad cases. It is not unlikely that in time all the colonies would come into the hands of the State. The advantages of having labour colonies

as an alternative to prisons for this class of offenders are obvious, and I hope that no false sentiment on the part of the public will stand in the way of these institutions. By them alone can the hopelessly idle man and the petty habitual offender be properly treated.

And here I should say that there is no intention to shut up a man simply because he is a vagrant. To qualify for sending to a labour colony, a man must have committed three or more vagrancy offences.

The remaining recommendations of the Committee are all of interest, but I can only now refer to them generally. They include, besides general exhortations as to economy in buildings, the following : —

Better control of common lodging-houses and shelters frequented by vagrants, and free food distributions to vagrants :

Further measures for the prevention of the spread of smallpox and other diseases by vagrants :

An amendment of the law to deal with sleeping-out where it constitutes a danger or nuisance :

Women and children vagrants to be received, where possible, at Workhouses instead of at casual wards :

Greater use of industrial schools for vagrant children.

In conclusion, I would point out that the necessity for action in regard to the vagrancy question still remains. The Local Government Board's weekly statistics for 1906 do not indicate any substantial decrease from the high figures for 1904 and 1905 ; and though possibly the improved conditions in trade which now exist may for a time reduce the number of vagrants, the problem has to be dealt with. The problem is an old one, and has hitherto withstood the half-hearted attempts which have been made to grapple with it.

The recommendations made furnish a complete scheme for meeting the difficulty, and I am confident

that no tinkering at the present system can have the same result. The members of the Committee were men of practical administrative experience, and they all looked at the question from different points of view, but they were unanimous in their general conclusions. These conclusions were arrived at after careful and thorough investigation, and I commend them most earnestly to the consideration of the Government, the Poor Law, and the country.

Mr CHARLES W. DEAN then read the following paper :—

VAGRANCY.

By Mr CHARLES W. DEAN,

Clerk, Ulverston Union.

I HAVE responded to the invitation of Sir William Chance to contribute to the discussion of the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy with reluctance and diffidence, and solely because of my official connection with the movement initiated by the Ulverston Board of Guardians which has resulted in an effort to combine the north-western counties of Cheshire, Cumberland, Lancashire, and Westmorland for the purpose of dealing with vagrants on some more uniform, humane, and profitable plan than is possible under the existing system of isolated wards and separate Boards of Control.

We hail the advent of the Departmental Committee's Report, if only because it is a long step towards the solution of one of the most difficult problems with which the social reformer has to deal, and we may reasonably hope that before long the recommendations will be crystallised in the form of a Parliamentary Bill.

The Report is a classic contribution to our Poor

Law literature, and to the members of the Departmental Committee the obligations of all who earnestly desire to see some reform of our present arrangements for dealing with the vagrant are due.

On the first page of the Report the Departmental Committee record their conviction—

“That the present system neither deters the vagrant nor affords any means of reclaiming him, and that a thorough reform is necessary.”

With this general pronouncement I think we all agree, and it is unnecessary, therefore, to trouble you with any citation of the existing statutory enactments and regulations which limit and control Boards of Guardians in their responsibilities towards the unfortunate section of the community now under consideration.

I have presumed that the right honourable gentleman who was the Chairman of the Departmental Committee, and has honoured this Conference by consenting to read the first paper on the subject, would naturally cover the whole ground of the Report and the recommendations arising therefrom, and that my simple duty would be only to refer to such of the recommendations to which many of us are opposed.

I therefore state at once that I am heartily in agreement with the recommendations of the Departmental Committee, save only those which relate to the transfer of the casual wards and the control of vagrants to the police.

The Committee's conclusion that—

“An essential condition of any reform in the relief of vagrants is an extension of the area of chargeability and management . . . ”

will be readily accepted, I have little doubt, but not so the proposal for the—

“. . . substitution for the Guardians of some other

authority, who will administer the law on uniform lines, and be subject to central control,"

except that I believe the great majority of Guardians do desire uniformity, and are not opposed to central control, at least in this connection.

Taking him for all in all I do not regard the tramp as worse than those idle profligate loafers who are a potent factor in the "in-and-out" section of our Workhouse communities, and I fail to see why one should have all the advantages which present-day Workhouses offer, whilst the other receives a measure of treatment which is unquestionably penal in its quality, and generally inferior to that he would receive as a criminal. I fail to see why he should be so far differentiated from all other classes of the destitute poor, and especially so if the honest wayfarer in search of work is to be found in the casual wards as frequently as some would have us believe.

The vagrant has been found in every country and in every age, and I am not sanguine that whatever we may do he will disappear altogether.

The Departmental Committee's recommendation for transfer to the police is largely based on the assumption that greater uniformity of treatment will be secured, and it has been urged that even if uniformity could be secured by combination of Boards of Guardians it would entail greater expense.

I believe that the police are just as humane and as kindly disposed towards the "poor fellow down on his luck" as other branches of the public service, but their primary duty is the prevention, detection, and punishment of crime, and except for actual breaches of the law I am opposed to a criminal agency dealing with any section of the destitute. I do not think it desirable to set up another authority to administer State relief, and I am convinced that all the advantages over the existing system contemplated by the Departmental Committee by their proposed transfer could be secured

if the law were so amended as to empower the Local Government Board to require the combination of Union or county areas. The police are controlled by Standing Joint-Committees in administrative county areas and by Watch Committees in boroughs having their own police, and these in turn are subject to the control of the Home Office. Are these conditions more favourable to a policy of uniformity than a combination of Boards of Guardians acting for a large area, representative in the truest sense of the word, and constituted by an Order of the Local Government Board?

I know from experience that it is difficult to secure uniformity of practice by simple agreement between public authorities, but the same law and regulations which would secure the advantages arising from uniformity at the hands of the police may, if Parliament so wills it, secure them at the hands of the Guardians.

Our Poor Law administrative forces contain a large number of intellectual men and women, to whom poverty in all its phases offers a congenial field of study and practical work, and by a broadening of the lines of treatment of the vagrant, the same influences which operate so successfully in other departments of our Poor Law administration will be freely and ungrudgingly exercised for the betterment of the unfortunate vagrant.

If we agree that the vagrant is by reason of his vagrancy criminal, I have little to urge against the Departmental Committee's recommendations, but regarding him largely as the waste product of our social and industrial system I am utterly opposed to any treatment of the vagrant by any penal method save for criminal offences, and urge that he should be considered as a subject for redemptive effort, and capable in the main of being rendered self-reliant and self-supporting.

I have not referred to possible difficulties or friction

which it has been suggested might arise between Guardians and the police or between Poor Law officials and the police. These are matters of detail, and if the change were made I do not anticipate serious difficulties in that connection.

I suggest that the defects of our present system arise from the inadequacy of the law, and from the fact that each Union or Poor Law parish, be it large or small, is the area of administration and chargeability—that the casual wards have been looked upon as necessary, but altogether undesirable, adjuncts of our Workhouse institutions, uninviting to the ordinary Guardian and official, and on the whole not receiving that careful and discriminating attention which obtains in other departments.

May I here state briefly how we stand in the north-western area as regards this question?

Our Committee, which we have designated our "Inter-County Committee," is representative of the Cheshire Unions, the Cumberland Unions, except Alston-with-Garrigill, Brampton, and Longtown; all the Lancashire Unions, except Bolton, Clitheroe, Liverpool (Parish), Rochdale, and West Derby; and the Westmorland Unions. It has affirmed the principle of the following resolutions passed at a vagrancy conference held at Lancaster in the autumn of 1905, viz. :—

1. "That this Conference is of opinion that the provision of farm and labour colonies under State control, or under the control of the Guardians of a county or of a combination of counties, for the more or less lengthened detention of habitual tramps, offers the best prospect of a favourable solution of the question, and desires the necessary legislation for the purpose."

2. "That this Conference urges upon the public the undesirability of bestowing indiscriminate alms, as it tends to foster that evil of vagrancy which it is desired to lessen."

3. "That the attention of Boards of Guardians be

drawn to the necessity of making some provision for a mid-day meal for the tramps who leave the casual wards."

Had it been possible for the Local Government Board to have afforded the Committee any help or encouragement, I have no doubt that practical effect would have followed the affirmation of the principles enunciated above.

Mr Slade, Clerk to the Wallingford Board of Guardians, has recently offered some interesting suggestions for dealing with the problem, but his plan would involve questions of settlement, the difficulties of which he proposes to minimise in the first instance by transferring vagrants to their places of birth.

My suggestion is that the vagrant should be considered as a ward of the nation and having no place of settlement, and that the whole or chief part of the cost of his maintenance should be repaid out of imperial funds through the Exchequer Contribution Account.

As to the exercise of economy in the erection of buildings and the administration of the colonies, we have no reason to believe that these desiderata will be secured at the hands of Councils of counties and county boroughs than at the hands of Guardians. Moreover, under combination of Boards of Guardians, you would secure by election or appointment from the constituent Boards a class of representative directly interested and concerned in the destitute poor.

The observations of the Committee on the evils resulting from indiscriminate almsgiving are well timed, but without a local Charity Organisation Society or Guild of Social Help it is hopeless to expect the average Englishman or Englishwoman to refrain from exercising the Christian virtue of charity. The ordinary individual owes it to his conscience to respond to the suppliant for his alms, and, until there is in operation some arrangement that will relieve him of

responsibility in this connection, so long will indiscriminate almsgiving continue.

I am entirely in sympathy with the recommendation that women and children should be received into the Workhouse instead of the casual wards. In most Workhouses accommodation could be found for them in the receiving wards, to which, in the first instance, they would be admitted.

Quoting from the Report,—Of the 9,768 casu-als relieved on the night of the 1st January 1905, only 887, or 9 per cent., were women, and 188, or rather less than 2 per cent., were children, and we stand to gain by taking women and children off the road ; and, further, I suggest that it should be obligatory upon Boards of Guardians to exercise their powers of adoption under the Poor Law Acts in regard to vagrant children.

I know that these suggestions are not regarded with favour by many able and experienced Poor Law workers, but humanity is higher than expediency, and if by adoption we can save the children from a life of vagrancy, or worse, it is clearly the path we ought to follow.

Of the "way-ticket" system I have had no experience, but the adoption of it is essential if there is to be any classification of vagrants. It seems to me, however, that all persons who take to the road should have a certificate of some kind, and there ought to be no difficulty in providing for this, as the vagrant, like the rest of us, must commence his professional career some time.

As to methods of identification, they are for the help and advantage of the casual as much as for the protection of the public, and I do not think we ought to be too sentimental in regard to the prescription of rules for photographing, finger-printing, &c., for all these would operate to the comfort of the casual when *bona fide* in search of work, and, when otherwise dis-

posed, would tend to the prevention and detection of crime.

The recommendations for the licensing, supervision, and control of common lodging-houses are welcome, but why should not local authorities be required to provide them? Such institutions are necessary for the casual and travelling labourer, and ought to be models of cleanliness, order, and efficiency, and under the strictest supervision, in the interests of sanitation and morality.

In conclusion, it is disappointing to find no mention in the King's Speech of proposed legislation, but should not this important deliberative Conference, and the no less important Association of Poor Law Unions, by Joint-Committee, at once formulate a definite line of policy, and obtain a mandate from all the Boards of Guardians in England and Wales either to promote a Parliamentary Bill, or to obtain from the Local Government Board Orders constituting combinations of Union or county areas under the existing law?

The present position of the question has created an opportunity for those best fitted to initiate and carry into effect a measure of reform, long recognised, and the necessity of which the Report now under review has strongly emphasised, and it will reflect on the administration of our Poor Law system if we fail to rise to the level of our traditions.

DISCUSSION:

Mr W. S. PRICE (Wellington) observed that it seemed presumptuous to attempt to controvert the position taken up by such an able and widely constituted authority as the Department Committee on Vagrancy. He feared, however, that the position of the small rural Unions in this matter had not been sufficiently considered. It might be suggested that Guardians were jealous of their authority, but he believed that all Guardians were simply desirous of this question being dealt with in the most prudent and efficacious manner. They had to consider, too, whether in their opinion the proposed changes would tend to economy and efficiency. The police were

the criminal authority for the country, and had already many duties to discharge, and if these new duties were put upon them there would probably be a large increase in the force. Not only so, but the police would be created a second relieving authority, and he urged that it was desirable that the administration of relief should remain in the hands of the one authority now charged with that duty. Largely the question was a choice of two evils, and the recommendation of the Committee was not the least. For in place of 600 co-ordinated authorities, it was proposed to place 200 independent authorities. This would lead to the reverse of uniformity. He suggested that it is possible for the Local Government Board to secure uniformity of administration among Boards of Guardians in this matter by curtailing the Guardians' discretion as regards diet, task work, and general relief of the casual poor. This would tend to disperse the idle and the worthless tramp. Then, too, the suggested dual control of certain premises would give rise to many serious questions, endless friction, and probably additional officers. He suggested that therefore the Guardians should continue to be the authority for relieving the casual poor, and that the required uniformity should be secured by regulation in the directions he had indicated, together with the adoption of remedial measures by a system of labour colonies as advocated in the Report. He intimated that he would propose the following resolution at the proper time:—"That in the opinion of this Conference, Guardians, as the one authority entrusted with the duty of relief of destitution, should continue to administer relief to the casual poor, but that uniformity of administration should be secured by the Local Government Board, who should also secure efficient supervision of the casual poor themselves by the police authorities."

Mr J. WALTON (Oswestry) said there was much in both papers with which he agreed. He thought there should be some distinction between the vagrants in large towns and those in country districts. A large proportion of the vagrants were soldiers or militiamen, and as these men had served their country something better ought to be found for them than the tramping of the roads. While there might be habitual vagrants, there were others who had tramped the country in vain in search of work. It was a surprise to him that there were so many convictions in one year for offences under the Vagrancy Acts as 30,000, for, as the Chairman of a Petty Sessions, in his district such cases were very few. The treatment to which the tramps were subjected in the casual ward placed really a premium upon petty pilfering, and he favoured a mid-day meal. The present uniformity in the treatment of tramps appeared to consist in Guardians getting as much work out of them as possible, and giving him as little to eat as possible. The need was for some system of classification of these tramps, but of course the problem was a difficult one.

Mrs M. EVANS (Strand) submitted an interesting table of the number of vagrants relieved in the Strand Union from midsummer

1901 to 1906, the total for six years being—Men, 159,128; women, 45,817; children, 2,953—a grand total of 207,898. Of these, 325 found their way to the Workhouse; 667 were sick and went to the infirmary; 79 went to the police; and 11 absconded—a total of 1,082 being accounted for out of the 207,898. Now they had scriptural authority for the statement that the poor would be always with us. She believed that to be true. Proposals were being made for diminishing the number of vagrants, but before success could be achieved in this direction they would have to deal with the many voluntary relief agencies which existed at present. She instanced the soup-kitchens, the Church Army tents, and the common lodging-houses. Was it possible to stop the flow of philanthropy and charity? No; and while the poor gravitated to London under the belief that there were golden squares and silver streets, so long would there be this vast army of casual poor.

Rev. H. W. TAYLOR (St Albans) agreed with the last speaker that philanthropy had a tendency not only to feed but to actually sustain vagrancy. However much they might argue, it was impossible to prevent sensitive people being touched by the sight of misery. But his point was that the view of the first paper was, or seemed to be, that vagrancy was more or less a crime. No doubt the condition of poverty was a matter of inconvenience for any community, but he dissented entirely from the view that it could be a crime. Offences truly might be committed by vagrant persons, but then similar offences were committed by other members of the community as well. It always appeared to him to be a species of cruelty that a man should be sent to prison for the offence of having nowhere to lay his head. Indeed, this should not be accounted an offence in any Christian country. Begging was also an inconvenient practice for society, but unless the begging was accompanied by impudence or menaces, the mere fact of begging was no crime. Besides, the Report of the Departmental Committee pointed out that, even supposing it was an offence, repression is no remedy. That was said in one paragraph, but in the next paragraph it was recorded that habitual vagrants should be sentenced to imprisonment for a period now exceeding twelve months as incorrigible rogues and vagabonds. Statistics were quoted to show that prison has no deterrent influence on vagrants, and that while shorter sentences are declared to be useless, longer sentences are regarded as equally inefficacious.

Col. D. C. LAMB (Salvation Army) opined that since this question was last ventilated at the Central Poor Law Conference considerable progress had been made towards a solution of the problem, although no plan would satisfy everybody. He knew of no question which had such a steady weight of public opinion behind it as this proposal for committal to and compulsory detention at a labour colony. He fancied that he had some right to speak on this question, because it had been left to the Salvation Army to definitely formulate and submit to the country a scheme for amend-

ing the Vagrancy Acts and establishing labour colonies, and the scheme had received influential support from all parties in the House of Commons. The Departmental Committee had reported that they had made out a case, and had made recommendations substantially adopting the proposals put forward by General Booth. Experience at the Hadleigh colony proved the desirability of advocating the right of voluntary entry and the power of detention. He advocated voluntary entry because two-thirds of the occupants of casual wards in the Metropolis were quite willing of their own accord to enter a labour colony without conviction. He was equally certain that a like proportion of the 1,500 homeless poor in the streets of London the previous night would gladly avail themselves of the opportunity if it existed. He knew there were difficulties in the minds of more than one member of the Government as to the liberty of the subject, and others were in favour of waiting for the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws. Again, it was said that the police were not to be trusted, and also that the magistrates were not safe. He thought, however, that the public were prepared to sacrifice a little sickly sentiment as to the liberty of the subject of the vagrant class, while the removal of the vagrant element from the unemployed class was a first essential to the proper consideration of the recurring problem of unemployment. (Hear, hear.) Personally he did not think there was any necessity to wait for the Report of the Royal Commission. The unemployed question was quite separate from that. If police and magistrates could not be trusted, then there was the alternative of the Government doing the work themselves, or, as a last resource, they could ask the Salvation Army to do it. (Laughter.) Well, if the Salvation Army did do it they could be criticised, but they were not pining for the job. All they felt was that something ought to be done, and done quickly. Whether the Guardians continued to do the work or the duty was transferred to the police, the man himself ought to be considered. He had an idea that the task was not so formidable as it seemed, if they approached it closely. If they could only convince the men it would be to their advantage to embrace any facilities provided, they would find their task easy. He pleaded urgency for this question, because it was disgraceful to modern civilisation that they should have such scenes as were to be found early every morning on the Embankment in this great Metropolis. The Committee's Report made reference to the free distribution of food, but what was to be done? The casual wards were full, and what were those poor creatures to do? He hoped that the Salvation Army would always be able to carry on this work while the necessity lasted. There was a wastage of civilisation, the product of modern conditions of society, and this element must be provided for somehow. He drew a vivid picture of the early morning scene on the Embankment, and concluded by urging that this despairing cry for deliverance must be answered, and that a way out must be found. (Cheers.)

Mr G. F. SLADE (Wallingford) urged that in considering this question they should first of all discover the points on which they were agreed. They all agreed that vagrancy was an evil, and that they ought to do the very best that was possible to diminish it. That they would be able to entirely remove it, he thought that they would all agree, was impossible. The only practical point, therefore, was whether means could be found for decreasing the evil. The difficulty of dealing with it was that there were different conditions in the country and in the large towns, and this fact made it impossible to obtain any general remedy. So far as the country Unions were concerned what was required was to get rid of the ordinary vagrant who wandered about without hope or without any intention of getting work. Such a class was not only a nuisance but in many cases a terror to the cottagers in lonely parts. Now the report of the Committee failed to deal with that class unless there were three convictions in any one year. The vagrant would know well how to avoid that condition, and very few would go into the labour colony. His suggestion was that on a given date they should get hold of all the vagrants who would not work and put them in a labour colony. He believed there was a general consensus of opinion that nothing could be done to solve the problem until labour colonies were established. That step must be taken if these vagrants were to be dealt with. Having got hold of all the vagrants in the way suggested, they should be returned to their settlement of birth as ordinary paupers and at once sent to a labour colony. The class of vagrant who did want work should be allowed to travel on pass, and in this way some sort of control could be exercised on this section of the population.

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY observed that his experience showed there was no way of securing uniformity of treatment except in the way suggested by the Report, viz., by transferring the orders for vagrants and to a certain extent their management from the Guardians to the police. (No, no.) It was easy to say no, but there were Boards of Guardians not represented at that Conference, backward Boards, which stand in the way of any reform in this matter. If it were only one county which stood out, a uniform system was rendered impossible. Every Union in the country must be brought into line if reform was to be carried into effect. This aspect of the matter, which was very important, had not been dealt with by any speaker, viz., as to the class of vagrant to whom they were going to give a pass-ticket. It was suggested that only workmen in regular work should have those tickets—that seemed to him a very great mistake. Vagrants were recruited very largely from the ranks of casual labour, and according to the Report that man would not have a ticket. Any workman who had been at work should have a pass from one place to another. What was the good of waiting to reform a man until he had been thrice convicted? That would be waiting till the opportunity for reform had gone. This was courting failure. The time

for reform was when he had ceased to be a regular workman and was becoming a vagrant. It should be an offence to attend a vagrant ward without a ticket. Any man going to a vagrant ward should have a pass, and every respectable, decent workman should be able to get a pass. It had been suggested that sending the vagrant to a labour colony was treating him like a criminal, but at the present time they were treating the vagrants worse than criminals, because under present circumstances the vagrant had entered upon a course which could have no ending but death. Nobody would employ or help him ; the vagrant had entered upon a miserable existence, and in reality he was worse off than a discharged prisoner, for whom an organisation existed in the Prisoners' Aid Society. There was no one to help the vagrant, and the present system was cruel. It would be far better to take the casual at once for six months in a labour colony and try to instil in him the habit of steady work.

Mr A. HARROWELL (Leighton Buzzard) regarded the object in view as being the reduction of the vagrant class, and to this end the first step was uniformity of treatment. But there were two sides to every question, and the mid-day meal might hinder rather than help. But to the genuine work-seeker a send-off meal was of great importance. Perhaps the most important view in the paper was the way-ticket system. If every one going into the casual wards had a way-ticket, information would at once be supplied of where the vagrants were, and a useful check supplied. To his mind the chief step towards reducing vagrancy would be to take all the children off the roads, and women too. If these two classes, which were a valuable asset to vagrancy, were taken off the road and a time limit for the other vagrants adopted, he believed that a solution of the problem would be in sight.

Rev. W. C. THOMAS (Eastry) contended that the proposed transfer of the vagrants from the care of the Guardians to the police was more theoretical than real. Guardians did not trouble much about the casual wards. (Cries of "Yes, Yes.") There was not a real interest in the casuals on the part of the Guardians, and the transfer would really be from the porter, relieving officer, or labour master. There was a flabby sentiment that Guardians had a sort of vested interest in their care of vagrants. In country Unions the vagrants were a danger, morally and physically, if they came in contact with the settled poor of those Unions. He did not, therefore, agree with the view in the Report that the women and children should be taken into the Workhouse, though vagrant men should be handed over to the care of the police. The tendency in Poor Law administration at present was to remove children as much as possible from Workhouse influences, and that was a good thing. Were they then prepared now to let the worst element—the vagrant women and children—into the Workhouses, and allow such bad influences to come upon their own poor in country Workhouses? One speaker had said

that humanity is higher than expediency ; that was true, but were the innocent to be allowed to suffer for the sake of the guilty ? Were these people to be received into the country Workhouses because humanity is higher than expediency ? No ; humanity said that these corrupting influences should be kept away. They should not forget that the transfer received was a transfer to those who were more capable than the Guardians of dealing with the vagrant classes.

Mr JAMES POTTER (Derby) urged that some vagrants were of a superior class to the inmates of the Workhouses, and had the grit to walk for miles rather than sink into the Workhouse and live a comfortable life. He severely criticised the administration of the casual wards, and asked if there was any equivalent between the task of the vagrant and what he received. No doubt vagrancy was a result of bad moral conditions that exist all around us, and he thought there would be an advantage in the classification of casuals in order to discover where they came from. He had no objection to the vagrant being placed under police care. In London many people were in the care of the police, and were thankful for the kindness they received. He favoured absolute police control of the vagrants. In some instances Guardians had failed in their duty ; Distress Committees were largely under the Corporations, and in some senses the Guardians had vacated their rightful position of dealing with poverty. Therefore they might with advantage now go a step further, and he favoured extended municipal action in dealing with certain distressed classes, for as a Guardian of fifteen years' standing he had found that good administration tended to decrease rather than to increase pauperism.

Rev. D. OWEN (Builth) urged that the Conference should address itself to a study of the causes of pauperism and vagrancy, as then they would be better able to determine what remedies should be applied to present evils of unemployment and poverty.

The Conference then adjourned for lunch.

FIRST DAY—AFTERNOON SITTING.

The President again took the chair.

Mr J. P. ADCOCK (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) said he was impressed by the view that if this question was to be solved it must be looked at not merely from a town point of view but from a country standpoint. Arguments which were correct as regards men in towns would not apply to men in the country districts. Some speakers seemed to think that there ought not to be any such thing as vagrancy. But it would be a very ideal condition if it could be abolished altogether. Just as in manufactures, there must be a certain amount of waste, so in society there must be waste products. Now in manufactures there were the bye-products, and he did not see why the bye-products of civilisation should not be turned to some useful account. It followed that some sort of work should be found for the class under discus-

sion. One thing was clear, the vagrant must either live by his own industry or he must live on the industry of others. All were agreed that the vagrant should not be allowed to live on the industry of others, and the problem, therefore, was how to find employment for him. As a countryman he was strongly in favour of putting the men to road-work, of which there was ample, and he believed that if there was a proper understanding between the Poor Law authorities and the municipal authorities work could be provided without a multiplication of officers. English roads were to-day a national disgrace, but the cost of their maintenance and repair should be a national charge and not a local one. Work for the vagrants would largely solve the problem, and if that work was provided he believed that the ranks of the vagrant and unemployed classes would soon be reduced.

Mr F. J. BEAVAN (Cardiff) pointed out that the keynote of Mr Wharton's paper was uniformity of action. That view had impressed itself upon his mind during a long series of years. This had been pressed upon the Local Government Board at the time Mr Shaw-Lefevre was President, and that gentleman had agreed, saying that if Boards of Guardians carried out the Orders of the Whitehall Department vagrancy would soon decline. His Board had taken right steps in the matter, but their neighbours did not do so, and hence the remedy of uniformity was as far off as ever. He failed to see, however, that uniformity would be secured by transferring the vagrants to the police, because while the police were uniformed they were not always uniform in their action. How was uniformity to be obtained through the various Watch Committees of counties and boroughs any more than through Boards of Guardians? He thought there was only one course to be pursued in reference to this class, and that was that they should be made a national charge and a national responsibility. Vagrants belonged to the country as a whole and not to localities. If they were handed over to the police he was afraid there would be very stereotyped forms of treatment, and there was no guarantee that Watch Committees would take more personal interest in the vagrants than did the Boards of Guardians at present. If the Government itself were to take over this duty they could issue instructions which would apply to every part of the country, and in this way uniformity of treatment could be secured. But he spoke with diffidence, knowing the great experience of the members of the Departmental Committee, but at the same time could not help feeling that the finger had not yet been placed upon the sore. Were they, in fact, much further forward through the suggestions made that day? He held that the responsibility was a national one, and that the Government should act through the Boards of Guardians as agents.

Mr J. H. MIDGLEY (Ulverston) agreed that so far as the cost of maintaining the vagrants was concerned, it ought to be a national charge. He did not favour placing this class under the police, but

was in favour of the extension of the area of administration by the formation of a combination of Unions, as was done in the North-Western Poor Law District. (Hear, hear.) He thought it was hardly fair to criticise Guardians for what they had done or not done in the past. Guardians had to work under cast-iron regulations, the only variation being the choice of task, and they had no chance of adopting reformatory methods. If Guardians had a chance of doing something in this direction by means of labour colonies, he believed there would be an improvement and a deeper interest taken by Guardians in the vagrant class, just as had been the case in the reformed methods of dealing with children and other pauper classes. He did not see why a combination of Guardians should be more extravagant than a County Council, which was not always an economical body. Certainly judging from his experience a combination of Guardians would be a much more suitable body for dealing with the vagrants than the police. A way-ticket system would undoubtedly be useful. He urged, therefore, that Guardians should be given a chance of trying reformatory methods, as there was ample evidence that such methods would be productive of good results. He hoped, too, that the country would not have to wait for voluntary agencies, and intimated that in regard to buildings, labour colonies should be very simple. They must not lose hope in dealing with this very difficult class.

Mr G. E. LLOYD BAKER (Wheatenhurst) referred to his own experience with the way-ticket system, which had been tried privately. The result was the vagrants decreased in number, because they hated the investigation which took place before their tickets were filled up, and partly because charitable people, knowing the vagrants got mid-day meals, were not disposed to give them pence. Hence there was a check on indiscriminate charity. He was glad, therefore, to see that the Committee received a substantial mid-day meal. He believed that such a system of supervision of vagrants would be much more easily carried out by the police than by the Guardians. (No, no.) At any rate, he believed the police would administer the system more uniformly than the Guardians. He favoured the establishment of labour colonies, and urged that sentences to these institutions should not be for less than one year. Short sentences, in his opinion, tended to manufacture vagrants. He desired to move—"That this Conference appreciates the valuable information in regard to vagrancy contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee, and hopes that the Government will give early consideration to the recommendations of such Committee."

The PRESIDENT said that he had a further resolution from Mr R. A. Leach, viz., "That this Conference disagrees with the proposal of the Vagrancy Committee that the police should be substituted for the Poor Law authority for the relief of vagrants, but is of opinion that an improved system of dealing with vagrants, either by combination of Unions or otherwise, should be adopted

without loss of time; and is also of opinion that vagrant relief expenditure should be a national charge."

It was agreed to continue the debate before dealing with the resolutions, of which there were three before the Conference.

Mr J. H. STEVENS (Swansea) was afraid the Conference was losing sight of the greater question of what was to be done to stop vagrancy. As a result of careful inquiry, he had found that in past years the average age of vagrants was sixty, but in Swansea the age limit had gone down to forty. He was afraid that a cause of this was the introduction of alien labour. (No, no.) Our own countrymen were being driven out, and this was specially true of London. (No, no.) He agreed that the way-ticket system had advantages, but what was required was to go to the fountain-head and stop the cause of vagrancy. Another cause of vagrancy was the drink question.

Mrs PRATT (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) observed that the debate turned on three points—cure, prevention, and transfer of powers. Mr Adcock had hit the right nail on the head when he said that employment on the roads would be cheaper than labour colonies, because these institutions could be made self-supporting. She also agreed that the introduction of aliens had a great deal to do with the question, and could not understand why our own people should be leaving this country while aliens were allowed to come in in such numbers. We were emigrating our best, and taking in anybody. Taking the children off the roads would do more than anything else to stop vagrancy. She was surprised that some Guardians should advocate the transfer of their powers, because what was their experience with the police to-day? The police had powers to deal with beggars, and if they used those powers could stop three-fourths of the begging that goes on. The police now took no notice of these offences, and if the powers were to be transferred, she hoped they would be handed over to somebody better than the police.

Mr J. G. B. STONE (Canterbury) pointed out that the question immediately before the Conference was the Departmental Committee's Report. He agreed with the description of that Report given by the reader of the second paper, Mr Dean, viz., that it was a classic contribution to Poor Law literature. It was a picturesque narrative, but had two drawbacks—first, that it would be very difficult to give legislative effect to many proposals it contained; and second, that it would be very difficult to administer any Act which might be passed as a result of those proposals. What was the reason for the proposed change of authority? Uniformity of action; but would they really secure uniformity of action by transferring the vagrants to the police or to their respective Watch Committees? It was a simple matter to bring up a Report of this kind, but it was a very difficult thing to put it into practice. He did not think they could blame Boards of Guardians for the lack of uniformity in the past, but he did not agree with the handing over the vagrants to the police or to the

Salvation Army, as had been suggested by Colonel Lamb. The enforcement of the Act of 1882 in Canterbury had led to a reduction in the numbers of those to whom relief was given from 13,000 to 2,289. The Government knew what it was doing in that case, perhaps an unusual thing for a government to do—(laughter)—but he believed if that Act had been strictly adhered to, there would have been no necessity for that Departmental Committee's Report. The laxity of which complaint had been made was as much the fault of the Local Government Board as of the Guardians.

Miss BRODIE-HALL (Eastbourne) observed that this important question had been discussed for years without anything being done. Surely the moment was inopportune for the airing of fads or the criticism of each other's opinions on matters of detail. She urged the Conference to come to a practical issue, and to consider only the Departmental Committee's Report and the substance of the two papers which had been read. Let them discuss main principles which would bring about a reform of vagrancy rather than deal with local methods. Personally she thought they should separate Metropolitan vagrancy from the vagrancy in the country generally. At these Conferences they often made the great mistake of forgetting that social work was done in London under entirely different circumstances—and under different Government Departments—from what was the case in the country. If this were remembered they would be able to avoid many details and party aspects of the question. The principle running through the Report was whether uniformity could best be secured, and the law, whether administered by Guardians, or the police, Home Office, or Local Government Board, must be obligatory. That was the beginning and the end of the whole question. She did not care a bit which body undertook the work as long as it was done. There was this advantage in transference to the police, that they were appointed by authority, and very strictly ruled and would do what they were told. She was sorry to say that Guardians, on the contrary, were elected for a great many different reasons and not always in order to administer the law in its best form, but often as a matter of sentiment or in hope of large relief being given to neighbours. She therefore thought in handing this duty over to the police there would be a greater chance of not only suppressing vagrants but of securing absolute fairness to them throughout the country. The unequal treatment of vagrants, who were well treated in some Unions and not in others, tended very much to encourage the overcrowding of vagrants in certain Unions and their absence from others. For instance, she knew of a case in which a lady distributed hot coffee and buns outside a casual ward, with the result that the numbers went up from 50 to 200. They should not forget the kind of tramps who frequented some parts of the country, and she appealed on behalf of the poor themselves for their suppression. On the South Downs, for instance, where there were lonely shepherds' cottages,

cases of ill-treatment by tramps often occurred. Then there was that other class of tramp, who, without being a "bad lot," preferred sleeping out of doors, and defied all efforts to bring him under better conditions. She quoted the case of a man, woman, and child who every year did the same vicious circle through Sussex and Kent, and although they earned plenty of money in the summer time would not settle down respectably under any conditions.

Councillor J. HEMINSLEY (Rotherham), having congratulated the President upon the excellence of his address, said one or two points in connection with the question had not received the attention they deserved. Let them for one moment take into consideration the terrible consequences of the lack of employment. Coming from a great industrial centre, he knew that during the last three or four years many men had been thrown upon the road through lack of work. Miners would wander from one colliery to another week in and week out; they belonged to that industrious class of men who were genuinely seeking work. To hand that class over to the police would meet with the most strenuous opposition in Yorkshire. Of course, there was also the idle class, but those men should be treated differently. Then he thought the benefit of the trade-union movement had not been sufficiently recognised. As one who for years had worked among miners, railway-men, and ironworkers, trying to raise them up to higher ideals, never had he known a trade unionist to appeal to the Board of Guardians in his district for assistance. That was an earnest of the desire of trade unionists to help themselves in Yorkshire and maintain their independence. This was a remarkable fact, considering that strikes and lock-outs were frequent in his county. He therefore urged that they should hold out the right hand of fellowship to trade societies operating amongst the workers of this country, and help them to foster the spirit of pride and independence among their members. (Cheers.)

It was then agreed to proceed with the consideration of the resolutions.

Mr W. S. PRICE (Wellington), in proposing his motion, strongly urged that as Guardians are the recognised administrators of the Workhouse and are responsible to the ratepayers, there should be no dual control with regard to the casual ward. He believed that Guardians generally approved of the recommendation of the Departmental Committee in regard to the way-ticket system and labour colonies because they believed they would be remedial, and would like to see those proposals carried into effect. Uniformity could be secured by a general Order of the Local Government Board in a way that was not possible with 200 different police authorities. The police, however, could be well utilised in connection with any way-ticket system or labour colony. He moved—"That in the opinion of this Conference, Guardians, as the one authority entrusted with the duty of relief of destitution, should continue to administer relief to casual poor, but that uniformity of administration should be

secured by the Local Government Board, who should also secure efficient supervision of the casual poor themselves by the police authorities."

Mrs SEEL (Rochford) seconded the motion, and expressed the hope that something definite would be done. Now was certainly the time to express an opinion on the matter, especially in regard to labour colonies. In her view, to place these casual poor entirely under the supervision of the police would be rather a retrograde step. What was wanted was to redeem them from their present condition of despair. The poor must always be with us, and they ought to be treated with humanity and kindness.

Mr R. A. LEACH (Rochdale) then proposed, as an amendment—"That this Conference disagrees with the proposal of the Vagrancy Committee that the police should be substituted for the Poor Law authority for the relief of vagrants, but is of opinion that an improved system of dealing with vagrants, either by combination of Unions or otherwise, should be adopted without loss of time; and is also of opinion that vagrant relief expenditure should be a national charge." He pointed out that while the first part of the motion proposed by Mr Price was against police control, the latter part of it was in favour of police control. The Departmental Committee, whose Report was before them, had been appointed by the President of the Conference in deference to the views of that Conference and the Poor Law Unions Association. The value of the Report was great, but that value would not be decreased if that Conference declined to endorse the recommendation in regard to the transference of duty from the Guardians to the police. The recommendation for transfer was based upon a desire to secure greater uniformity, but each of the 200 police authorities was an independent authority, and there was more chance of uniformity under 600 Boards of Guardians under one central authority. (Hear, hear.) The question of vagrancy was national in character, and therefore the change should be national. If the recommendation of the Committee was carried out, he ventured to say that in the city of Durham, with which Mr Wharton was associated, the incidence of charge for vagrancy would be made still more narrow than it is at present, because the Police area was smaller than the Union area. In Rochdale, if the Report were carried out, the city borough would be a self-contained police area for dealing with vagrants, and that was a smaller district than that which his Board of Guardians now administered. Mrs Pratt had put the matter admirably, and the police had not yet exhausted their present powers for dealing with criminal vagrants. The statistics given in the right honourable gentleman's paper showed that the percentage of short sentences for begging and sleeping-out was larger than the short sentences for criminal paupers. This showed how the police and the magistrates managed laws as regards criminal vagrancy. Men got on to the road through sheer necessity—the police were the instruments of criminal

law, the Guardians were instruments for the relief of destitution ; therefore they could not carry out the recommendations of the Committee without agreeing to what he was sure the Conference was against, viz., treating poverty as a crime. (Cheers.)

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS (Holywell) seconded the amendment. He had already expressed his views on this question before the Committee, and now only desired to emphasise one remark from the reader of the second paper, viz., that the time had come when there should be an end to the discussion of this vexed question, and legislation should be formulated. He agreed that the time had come when the Conference should appoint representatives, with representatives from the Poor Law Unions Association, to confer for the purpose of drafting proposals which could be put into a Bill in the House of Commons.

Mr PRICE here agreed to accept the amendment.

Mr G. E. LLOYD BAKER proposed a further amendment—"That this Conference appreciates the value of the information upon vagrancy contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee and hopes that the Government will give their earnest consideration to the subject."

Mr TACON (East and West Flegg) seconded this amendment.

The amendment was lost, the necessary two-thirds of the Conference not supporting, and it was agreed to leave the resolution to be re-drafted by the President in accordance with the sense of the Conference.

It was further resolved that a copy of such resolution should be forwarded to the Local Government Board.

On the motion of Mr G. CRAIGHILL, a hearty vote of thanks was accorded to the readers of the papers, and the Conference adjourned.

WEDNESDAY, 20TH FEBRUARY.

The PRESIDENT again took the chair.

At the commencement of the proceedings, the President referred to the resolution in regard to vagrancy passed the previous day, and said that he had drafted it as follows—"That in the opinion of this Conference, Guardians, as the only authority entrusted with the duty of relief of destitution, should continue to administer relief to the casual poor ; but that uniformity of administration should be secured by combination of Unions, and that this reform should be adopted without delay. The Conference also desires to express the opinion that expenditure connected with vagrant relief should be made a national charge. The Conference further desires to call the attention of the Government to the very

valuable information contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, and to urge that immediate steps shall be taken to deal with this most pressing question."

On the motion of Dr RHODES, it was unanimously resolved to confirm this resolution.

Sir WILLIAM CHANCE, Bart., then read the following paper:—

THE INCREASING BURDEN OF POOR RELIEF.

BY SIR WILLIAM CHANCE, BART.,

*Hon. Sec. Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences and a Guardian of the
Hambladen Union, Surrey.*

I DO not think that any excuse is required for bringing the subject of my paper before this important Conference. The steady increase of poor relief expenditure during the last fifteen years has naturally attracted the public attention; for the increase has far outpaced the increase of pauperism, and people have for some time been asking why this should be. The gross cost of poor relief nearly reached the huge sum of $14\frac{1}{2}$ million pounds during the year ended Lady Day 1905, the last year for which official statistics have been published. It has gone on increasing in good times and bad times alike, during the last fifteen years especially. It is time that the causes of this increase should be closely examined. The main cause is to my mind very clear, all other causes appearing to me to be subsidiary to and closely wrapt up in it.

But I must first place some figures before you. In 1880 the gross poor relief expenditure of England and Wales was £8,015,010, or 6s. $3\frac{3}{4}$ d. per head of population; in 1890 it was £8,434,345, or 5s. $11\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head; and in 1905 it was £14,394,411, or 8s. $5\frac{1}{4}$ d. per head.* On the other hand, taking the mean

* The figures for 1904-05, given on p. 591 of the Thirty-Fifth Annual Report of the Local Government Board, are £13,851,981, or 8s. $2\frac{1}{2}$ d. per head, but this figure is arrived at after making cer-

pauperism of the country, the figures are, for 1880, 808,030 paupers of all classes; for 1890, 775,217 paupers; and for 1905, 884,365 paupers. Thus we see that the great rise in both pauperism and relief expenditure has occurred since 1890, although the latter has increased out of all proportion to the former.

1890 to 1905.

Increase of Poor Relief Expenditure	-	70.7 per cent.
„ Pauperism	-	14.1 „ „

tain deductions which were not made in previous years. Therefore, for purposes of comparison, the gross relief expenditure must be taken.

The deductions are as follows:—

Gross relief expenditure for 1904-05 - - - £14,394,411
Deduct—

(a) Estimated value of transfers from certain more or less productive accounts * included under “In-maintenance,” &c.	-	-	£288,986
(b) Sums received by Boards of Guardians in repayment of relief given by them to paupers not settled in their Unions	-	-	253,444
			542,430

Total	-	-	£13,851,981
(c) Receipts from relatives of paupers, sale of farm produce, &c., and proportion of rents, interest, &c.	-	-	767,028

Net relief expenditure - - - £13,084,953

The expenditure on the maintenance of lunatics in county and borough asylums, registered hospitals and licensed houses, for which Boards of Guardians are in no wise responsible, should also be deducted, viz. - - - 2,339,963

£10,745,990

Of the net relief expenditure of £13,084,953, not less than £2,605,987 was in respect of grants in aid, &c., from Imperial taxation, so that only £10,478,966 was directly borne by the local rates.

* Farm, garden, stores, firewood, oakum, baking, &c., accounts.

It is a remarkable fact that while London relief expenditure increased considerably between 1870 and 1890, the increase in the expenditure of the rest of the country has only become marked since the latter date. The following table makes this clear :—

Year ended Lady Day.	London.	Rest of the Country.	Total.
	£	£	£
1870 - -	1,465,874	6,178,433	7,644,307
1890 - -	2,340,559	6,093,786	8,434,345
1895 - -	2,937,409	6,929,196	9,866,605
1900 - -	3,594,841	7,972,808	11,567,649
1905 - -	4,018,504	10,375,907	14,394,411

You see that there was an actual decrease of relief expenditure outside London between 1870 and 1890, but that since then each division has risen with equal rapidity. Now I will not trouble you with many figures, and I want to make my paper short so that plenty of time may be left for Colonel Clark's valuable paper, and for discussion. But I think it well to remind you, with a view to your consolation (if possible), that the increase of the burden of poor relief is weighing less heavily on the shoulders of the rate-payers than the increase of other local taxation burdens. Indeed, if the poor relief pressure were entirely removed, we would be hardly conscious of relief; for other burdens of taxation have, curiously enough, increased still more noticeably during the last fifteen years or so. In 1890 the public rates received by local authorities amounted to £27,713,409. In 1904 they had risen to £52,941,665. The cost of highways and bridges, &c., rose during the same period from £5,890,554 to £10,327,176; the cost of elementary education from £4,056,696 to over £17,000,000; the cost of sewerage and sewage disposal from £949,489 to £2,005,583. One has only to look at one's half-yearly demand note to see where the greatest pressure

is. The last one which I received was for 2s. in the £, distributed thus :—

Relief of the Poor and other Expenditure of the Guardians	6½d.
General expenses of Rural District Council (including highways)	6½d.
County Contributions	9½d.
Expenses of the Overseers	1½d.

Thus only 28 per cent. of the half-yearly rate went in poor relief. I am sure that if you all analysed your last demand notes in the same way you would find much the same state of things.

I do not, of course, in any way wish to defend the increase of the rate for poor relief; but taking Boards of Guardians generally, they seem to me to have the least responsibility for the increase in that portion of the rate over which they have control. If anybody has to be hung they will not be hung first. What, then, is the order of demerit?

First of all I place public opinion, or in other words the House of Commons, which must be taken to represent it. This is the main cause to which I have referred. The socialistic spirit has permeated for some years the whole administration of the public moneys.* Next I place the Local Government Board, and lastly, the Guardians. It is almost a repetition of the "House that Jack built!"—

This is the pauper palace which the Guardians built. This is the Local Government Board which allowed the loan for the palace which the Guardians built. This is the House of Commons which by its legislation or reports of Select Committees forced the Local Government Board to allow the loan for the pauper palace which the Guardians built.

Or to vary the refrain—

This is the extension of relief which the Guardians gave. This is the Local Government Board which

* See "Socialism in the House of Commons," in *Edinburgh Review*, October 1906.

could not prevent the extension of relief which the Guardians gave. This is the House of Commons which by its legislation or reports of Select Committees placed it out of the power of the Local Government Board to prevent the extension of relief which the Guardians gave.

It is quite certain that the period of increased relief expenditure synchronises with the growth of a feeling in favour of what is called, quite falsely in my opinion, a more humanitarian administration of the Poor Law. Up to the nineties of the last century the view generally prevailed that the relief of the poor out of the public funds was not to be made pleasant for them. Consequently, outdoor relief was to be the exception and not the rule, while the Workhouse was not to be made attractive. This opinion held the field from the early seventies, and it was strongly supported by most of the papers read at Poor Law Conferences. The fact that the mean number of paupers fell from 1,037,360 in 1870 to 744,757 in 1892, shows that this preaching had a considerable effect. At any rate the principles of the reformers of 1832 were generally accepted. But during the last fifteen years these principles have been questioned, and a new party—a very powerful party—has arisen, which denies that public relief should be made deterrent, and that the Poor Law should deal with poverty as well as with destitution. The distinction between the two things is to be wholly abolished, and the pauper is to be made as comfortable as possible both inside and outside the Workhouse. Parliament, as I have said, has responded to the pressure by this party, and we see the effect in the Outdoor Relief (Friendly Societies) Act, in Mr Chaplin's Circular for extended outdoor relief to the aged poor, and in the greater comforts given to the inmates of Workhouses as recommended by Select Committees. We see the result in "pauper palaces," and increased outdoor

relief, and a resulting rise in pauperism and relief expenditure. The Workhouse has almost ceased to be deterrent.

I hope I have stated the case of the modern reformers fairly. I can hardly think that they can dispute the facts. Still I am loath to believe that even they can approve of the extravagant expenditure on Poor Law institutions, such as over half a million pounds being spent on one Workhouse to hold 758 inmates—a cost of just on £336 a bed—or of casual wards being built at a cost of £346 per vagrant.

It might be a great saving to the London ratepayers if there was a central station for supplying all the Metropolitan Boards with their necessities, which would enable these to be bought in large amounts and cheaply, and to be provided to Boards at wholesale prices. I also agree with those who think it a mistake for an architect to be paid 5 per cent. on all work carried out under his directions. This system offers a great opening for extravagance. I have no doubt that useful suggestions will be forthcoming for reducing the expenditure upon indoor relief, for it is under this head that the greatest increase of relief expenditure has occurred. I shall have failed in the object of my paper if it does not induce such suggestions.

Many persons seem to imagine that the establishment of old age pensions is going to reduce poor relief expenditure. If they were established to-morrow they would scarcely affect the numbers in our Workhouses and infirmaries. They would undoubtedly remove a considerable number of outdoor paupers from the relief lists, but it would be merely transferring the burden from the one shoulder of the ratepayer to his other shoulder as a taxpayer, while adding a very large number of other dependents to that shoulder as well. This is not the way to reduce the ever-pressing burden of poor relief, for I still hold firmly to my belief that an

extension of public relief, in whatever way it may be brought about, is against the interests of the whole community—poor and rich alike, and, in referring to the question of old age pensions, I venture to express the hope that it may be in abeyance until after the Report of the Royal Commission on the Poor Law has made its appearance. The subject is not of such pressing importance that it need be dealt with immediately, or indeed within the next three years.

In conclusion, so far as Poor Law administration is concerned, I can myself see no way leading towards reduction of pauperism and poor relief expenditure, except by attention being paid to the old precepts,* such as :—

(1) The election of Guardians of capability who take up the work for the interest of the poor alone, without any regard to their own personal interests.

(2) The appointment of officers solely on their merits, and not by favouritism or jobbery.

[A good Board of Guardians will always have good and reliable officers.]

(3) A strict administration of relief without fear or favour.

[Guardians must remember that they are trustees of the public moneys, which must not be used for any purpose other than that for which they are levied.]

(4) Absolute integrity and honesty in the question of tenders and contracts.

And (5) close co-operation with all recognised charitable agencies in the matter of relief.

I think, also, that the Local Government Board might well exercise a closer and more careful control over poor relief expenditure, especially in the matter of buildings. There are signs that this is now being done.

* See also the thoughtful article on "The Royal Poor Law Commission, 1905, and the Condition of the Poor," in the *Edinburgh Review* of April 1906.

I believe that the large majority of Boards of Guardians in this country are actuated by these principles. What has been brought to light recently may have served a good purpose in drawing the attention of the ratepayers to the necessity of carefully choosing their representatives, not from those who make the most promises, but from those who promise merely to administer the Poor Law in a perfectly just and impartial manner.

Colonel GERARD CLARK (Brentford) then read the following paper :—

GUARDIANS' CONTRACT BUSINESS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON THE RATES.

BY COL. GERARD CLARK,
Guardian, Brentford Union.

AMONG the questions considered at Poor Law Conferences, some are of interest to scattered country Unions, others concern large urban Boards, many are of great educational value, but comparatively few, perhaps, directly influence the votes of the delegates or the policy of the Boards they represent. The question of the contracts under which the food and other necessities required at Guardians' institutions are supplied is, however, one which has a direct bearing on the work of all of us; we have recently had proof that the Local Government Board considers the matter of great importance, and I have a strong suspicion that if more attention were paid to the matter, the burden of the rates might, in many Unions, be materially lessened.

It would not be right for me to do more than allude incidentally to a Blue-book which was issued last autumn, or to proceedings in the law courts, nor am I going to tell you that I believe corruption is rife

among us. On the contrary, my experience leads me to think that the Guardians' administration is, with very few exceptions, absolutely free from underhand dealings, and that, especially where the Guardians set a high standard, they are well and honourably served by their officials; but it is useless to attempt to disguise the fact that we are in many matters absolutely in the hands of our officers, and that opportunities of putting money into their own pockets or benefiting a friend may not be wanting to the Guardians themselves. It behoves us, therefore, so to order matters that our commercial transactions shall be transparently above board and our officers as far as possible protected from temptation.

Whatever irregularities may have occurred, it is of course essential that tenders should be sent direct to the clerk, and retained in his custody intact until they are opened while the Board is sitting, by, or in the presence of, the chairman, by whom they ought invariably to be initialed. When several items are included in one tender, the prices must be worked out and added up—"extended," I believe, is the technical term—and it is difficult to see why this should not always be done by the tenderer, in which case the figures only require checking in the office. Where, however, both quality and price are factors in the choice, and there are many items to go through, if the work is to be properly done, to open the tenders and come to a final decision about them on the same day is quite impossible. There would be time neither to examine the samples nor to check the figures.

In some Unions the samples are, on a subsequent day, inspected by a committee of the whole Board, or in other words, by whatever members may turn up. Personally, I think that the selection of the tenders to be recommended to the full Board is likely to be better done if the work be entrusted to a definite set of members. This may very well be the house committee,

where the whole establishment is under their management, but where there are also school and infirmary committees, a contracts committee would be necessary. For obvious reasons those inspecting the samples ought not to know whose they are, and should either judge the quality before being told the price, or, being at the outset told which was the cheapest tender, should select that for recommendation to the Board if they found the quality satisfactory, or the next cheapest the samples of which they approved.

The method of procedure when the third stage is reached, and the tenders are finally considered by the Board, sitting as a Board, is complicated by the fact that whereas contractors for many articles can be confronted with the samples they themselves have submitted or for which they have tendered, and can be more or less compelled to supply in accordance therewith; in other cases, such as meat, fish, milk, poultry, and coal, it is the honesty of the contractor which alone can be relied on for the proper fulfilment of the contract. It follows that in the latter case the Board will rightly insist on having the tenderer's identity made known before any decision be arrived at; whereas in the former it would be better that the names should not be revealed until a tender has been selected, provisionally on the firm from whom it has been received not having proved unsatisfactory in the past. It has been suggested to me that if, when the tenders were opened, the names of firms tendering were read out, a decision could then and there be come to as to which should not be considered. The tenders left in could afterwards be dealt with strictly on the questions of price and quality, and without any further mention of the names. There seems much to recommend this alternative plan.

To see that the goods delivered are satisfactory, the house or contracts committee, as the case may be, should make inquiries of the heads of their differ-

ent institutions and from time to time themselves go round and inspect the stores. Unless this be done, the time spent in selecting the samples will not have been of much avail.

There are on most Boards Guardians who strongly favour accepting the tender of a ratepayer in competition with one from an outsider, even at a higher price, and it is said to be the settled policy of some Boards, whenever possible, to decline to consider tenders from beyond the Union area. *Cæteris paribus*, we should all wish a ratepayer to have the business, but to benefit one or more, who may happen to be tradesmen, at the expense of the other ratepayers, for this is what it comes to, is a travesty of Protection. Besides, if it be understood that the competition is limited, an arrangement between the favoured few is only too likely. In the interest of the general body of ratepayers, merit alone ought to determine the choice; the tenders being so widely advertised that a really effective competition may result.

Though it may often mean a higher price, it is a great safeguard to specify, where feasible, for proprietary articles, and I would suggest that where these are not available, the Guardians should, as far as possible, have their own samples, which tenderers should be required to follow. It is hardly practicable to keep standing samples of articles the fashion of which is constantly changing, such as clothing materials and haberdashery, or of those which are very perishable, but samples of grocery would with care keep well enough while a contract was running, and in the majority of articles no difficulty would arise. Anyhow the fewer the samples submitted with the tenders, the more level ought to be the quality supplied, and the less complicated will be the work of selection. It may be said that to "split" tenders would greatly facilitate matters. Of course all tenders should provide for this being possible, but it is unpopular with

tenderers, and gives so much trouble to the Guardians that the power is not likely to be very much used. I would, however, press two points on your attention:—1st, That each tender form should embrace as few articles as possible, goods which are usually sold by different traders being on no account combined on the same form; and 2nd, that it cannot be good policy to decline to consider a tender because no price may have been given for certain of the items included in it. To act in this way is the direct negation of splitting contracts. One cannot help wishing that professional advice could be obtained for the selection of all tenderers' samples, as it is now by some Boards for tea, but it would be expensive, and it might be difficult to find experts who were quite disinterested, or who at all events might not be suspected of being open to corrupt influences.

There are special difficulties connected with the supply of some of the Guardians' requirements. I have so far been unable to find a description of the meat which seemed to make any difference in the quality supplied. I might lay myself open to a charge of libel if I stated my true opinion of the poultry commonly supplied under contract by shops, and yet, as this is required for the sick, it ought to be of good quality. The tickets of automatic weighing-machines are considered to prove the delivery of a given weight of coal, but they can be produced to show whatever figures may be desired without any weight having passed over the drawbridge, and recent police court proceedings would lead one to believe that, where the supply is large, collusion between the dealer and the Guardians' officials is particularly easy. Again, colliery invoices can hardly be relied upon when furnished by a dealer sufficiently unscrupulous to supply other than the particular coal contracted for.

I hold that a contractor who would seem to have been guilty of any deliberate fraud ought to be pro-

show the effect of economies introduced and would bring to light any leakage that may have occurred. I may add that what I propose was, in its main principle, recommended by the Council of the Poor Law Unions Association in 1905, and I would suggest that it would greatly add to their value if the returns were made available, so that Boards could compare their work with that of others.

It has been suggested that the contract work should be transferred from the Metropolitan Unions to a central independent body. This would be better than bad contracting by individual Unions, but besides entailing further expense, it would, I fear, give rise to serious differences of opinion as to the quality and suitability of the supplies, between the central body of the first part, the Unions concerned of the second part, and, unless the goods passed through a central depot, the contractors of the third part. It would, too, of course, only affect London Unions. I should expect a better result with less friction from a reform of the present procedure, where reform may be needed, and from the publication of the proposed returns. But I do not pretend to be an expert. My main object has been to arouse an interest in the subject, to ask my brother-Guardians to see that they deal in a business-like way with what is a pure matter of business. If I succeed in this I shall be quite satisfied.

APPENDIX.

The General Order, dated 31st December 1877, recites Articles 44-51 of the General Order (Consolidated) of the 24th July 1847, and adds certain other provisions. For the present purpose the following seem the most important points :—

Contracts must be entered into “for the supply of all provisions, fuel, clothing, furniture, or other goods or materials,” estimated to

exceed an average cost of £10 per month, or £50 in a single sum, and "any work or repairs" which may be reasonably estimated to cost more than £50; and further, except "with the consent of the Commissioners first obtained," sealed tenders must be required before entering into such contracts. Arts. 45, 46, and 49.

"Notice of the nature and conditions of the contract," of the estimated requirements, "of the last day on which tenders will be received, and the day on which the tenders will be opened" must be advertised "in some newspaper circulating in the Union not less than ten days previous to the last day on which such tenders are to be received." Art. 47.

"No tender shall be opened by the Clerk, or any Guardian, or other person, prior to the day specified in such notice, or otherwise than at a meeting of the said Guardians." Art. 47.

"In the event of any breach of agreement at any time on the part of the contractor, the contract shall be determinable summarily by the Guardians, without compensation to the contractor. The contract may also be put an end to at any time by the L.G.B., or by the Guardians with the consent or by the direction of that Board, upon giving days' notice to the contractor." Par. 1.

"Rejected goods or materials are to be removed by and at the expense of the contractor within seven days after notice shall have been given him of the rejection. If not so taken away, the Guardians may cause the goods or materials to be removed and charge the contractor with all expenses incurred in such removal." Par. 4.

In case of failure by the contractor to deliver goods, &c. demanded, "within the period limited for delivery," or "of the stipulated quality, weight or measure," or without correct invoices, or of his failing forthwith to supply satisfactory goods in place of those rejected, the Guardians may purchase others, "and any excess of cost so incurred by the Guardians over the contract price, together with all charges and expenses attending the purchase, shall be recoverable by the Guardians from the contractor." Par. 5.

The contractor has the right to demand arbitration in case he considers himself aggrieved at the rejection of his goods, and "the expenses of the arbitration shall be paid by the party against whom the decision under this condition shall be given." Par. 6.

"The contract, or any part, share, or interest in it, is not to be transferred or assigned by the contractor, directly or indirectly, to any person or persons whomsoever without the written consent of the Guardians." Par. 7.

Instructions are also given (a) as to the form and wording of the tenders; (b) of the fact of the acceptance of such tenders; (c) of the bonds to be entered into; (d) and as to the invoices in duplicate to be delivered with the goods, the quarterly accounts, and the payment for the same by the Guardians.

DISCUSSION.

Mr J. G. B. STONE (Canterbury) observed that the readers of these papers must have drawn their inspiration largely from the neighbourhoods which figure in the novels of Mr W. W. Jacobs. (Laughter.) Valuable points had been raised in both of them, and Sir William Chance and others who undertook a crusade against profligate expenditure and extravagance of public bodies in general—not Boards of Guardians in particular—would have the support of all right-thinking men. Varying an old adage, he would say that charity begins in London, and thought there was an authority in the Metropolis which had hit upon a novel way of carrying people from Old Swan Pier to Greenwich which ought first to have attention. (Cries of "Question.") He did not think Boards of Guardians were alone to blame for increased local expenditure. Poor relief was not the only charge upon the poor rate. There was, for instance, the growing cost of lunacy. Education had also added a trifle to the rates. The public could not have it both ways. If they would persist in the socialistic spirit referred to by Sir William then we should be soon reduced to the condition of the people who got their living by taking in each other's washing. (Laughter.) But he did not believe that poor-relief expenditure would be reduced by making the Workhouse less attractive. It was not the poor who cost the money—he would not say it was the officials, because there were too many of them there. (Laughter.) But even in judging of the little matter which had recently been brought to light, the public could not forget there were also little "affairs" in South Africa. (Hear, hear.) So that if Guardians were to be hung hereafter they would be hung in the company of other people. But he believed, as a whole, the public life of this country was as pure in the lower as it was in the higher places. He would not admit that there is any more favouritism in appointing a Workhouse porter than there is in appointing a Cabinet Minister. While he was grateful to Sir William for his advice, he was glad to think that Guardians did not stand in need of all of it. (Cheers.)

Mr R. AFFLECK (Gateshead) pointed out that Sir William laid a good deal of the blame for the increasing poor rate upon Boards of Guardians, but to his mind the culprit was the Local Government Board, whose Orders bound down the Boards of Guardians. As an illustration he mentioned the Vaccination Order, 1898. Prior to that date the cost of vaccination was 1s. 6d. per case, but by the Act of 1898, which was primarily brought in to provide for the conscientious objector, the arrangement of fees was left to the Local Government Board. Within two months of the passing of the Act the Local Government Board issued an Order which increased the fees from 1s. 6d. to a minimum—not a maximum—fee of 5s. ("Shame.") That naturally caused heat and indignation amongst Boards of Guardians throughout the country. Owing to representations made by

the Poor Law Unions Association and various individual Boards a Departmental Committee was appointed, and one of its recommendations was that the minimum fee should be reduced to 2s. 6d. That was in 1904; but even in 1907 effect had not been given to the Departmental Committee's recommendation. This meant that Boards of Guardians still had to pay 100 per cent. more for vaccination than was absolutely necessary, as recommended by the Departmental Committee. Last summer the President of the Local Government Board stated in Parliament that the Order carrying out the recommendations of the Departmental Committee would be issued in the autumn, but up till now the Order had not yet made its appearance. Surely the authority to set an economical example to Boards of Guardians should be the Local Government Board itself. Then another Order of the Local Government Board to which he would call attention was the old Dietary Order, which specified that 4 oz. of bread should be given to every inmate. It was found as a consequence of carrying out this Order much bread was wasted, but it took several years hammering at the Local Government Board before an alteration could be made in the direction of giving Workhouse masters *carte-blanc* to serve bread according to the actual requirements of the inmates. The result was that to-day inmates of Workhouses were being provided with ample bread at considerably less cost than was formerly the case. (Hear, hear.) Reference had been made to the Workhouse for 750 inmates costing £336 a bed, but he held that for that expense the Local Government Board was responsible, as the plans, specification, and the cost had to be approved by the Whitehall authority. He believed that if more power and greater discretion were given to Boards of Guardians an improvement would be effected, but as things were at present the poor rates instead of going down were likely to increase.

Dr J. M. RHODES (Chorlton) said that while the Conference was greatly indebted to the readers of the papers, they had, in dealing with the debit side, omitted to give the credit side in the regard to the increase in the rates. The poor rate was paid not by the rich so much as by the poor, and therefore the interest of the poor had to be considered most. What the ratepayer demanded to-day was that he should get value for his money. Of course the ratepayers grumbled, but they should remember Gilbert and Sullivan's lines:—

"Oh, won't the day seem dull and flat
When there's nothing at all to grumble at?"

(Laughter.) If Guardians did their duty the ratepayers would grumble and return them; if they did not do their duty they would grumble and turn them out. (Hear, hear.) Now, did the ratepayers get better value for their money than they used to? (Cries of "Yes" and "No.") As a Guardian of twenty-five years' standing he could say unhesitatingly that there never was a time in England when the public got better value for their money than now. (Hear,

hear.) Take the schools : in the old days from 20 to 25 per cent. of the children came back to the Poor Law as paupers ; to-day there was not 5 per cent. Was not that true economy and good return for money ? Reference had been made to the officials. Well, the increase there was mainly in regard to nurses in the infirmaries, because the public had insisted upon having the infirmaries turned into decent hospitals in order that the wage earner could the sooner be restored to his employment. Was not that true economy ? As to the dietary, he contended that this had not added to the burden of the rates. It had been done on scientific lines, and he desired to pay a tribute to Dr Downer for the immense pains he had taken in the matter. In regard to the increase in lunacy : for the last three years there had been no increase in the ratio of admissions to the asylums, although up to three years ago there was an increase. He held that if they were to stop the multiplication of the unfit provision must be made for the unfit, and this was true national economy. All this meant money, but there was a credit side to the expenditure which was often overlooked. (Hear, hear.)

Rev. J. SHAW (Epsom) said Sir William Chance was very far from tender in his indictments of the Poor Law administration during the last fifteen or twenty years. But he was not prepared to accept the point of view. (Hear, hear.) The point of view was too narrow in its range to include all that is essential to the forming of a right judgment upon the administration of the Poor Law either during the last twenty or fifteen years. Suggesting one or two modifications of the point of view, he said, first as to the treatment of our Workhouse poor. Prior to 1890, the date Sir William said the increased expenditure commenced, the treatment was unjust. Public opinion was quite right in demanding an extensive and ameliorating change, both in the spirit and the method of it. Before the nineties some of the ablest writers, both in prose and poetry, did tell this country in very forcible language that the rigours and repulsions which characterised the administration of the Poor Law up to the sixties were inhuman. (Laughter and hear, hear.) Then the fact that more than 80 per cent. of the people in the Unions are over sixty years of age was ignored. (Hear, hear.) That fact should have led to an inquiry as to what were the educational, social, and industrial conditions from which the poor people sixty years of age came from, and if those conditions were examined justly it would be seen that it was impossible for any of them to have earned sufficient, by the equipment with which they were started in life, to provide for their old age. Another thing was that during the last fifteen years the wage-earning age has become shortened, and it was only fair to say that owing to the economic conditions in which the industries of this country had to be conducted in the future, it was very probable that the wage-earning age would be more limited still. Sir William had not proved that, despite the large increase in total amount spent on the

relief of the poor, it had had the effect of filling the Workhouses with people who had no claim to be there, or of there being on outdoor relief an army of undeserving cases.

The PRESIDENT announced that the Conference was favoured and honoured by the presence of Dr Macnamara, the Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board. (Applause.) He was sure it would be their wish that he should offer to him a warm expression of thanks for the honour he has done the Conference in attending, and hearty congratulations upon his recent appointment. Doubtless the Conference would desire to hear from him anything he might be good enough to say. (Applause.)

Dr MACNAMARA, who was received with cheers, said he did not think it necessary to assure the Conference how much he appreciated the invitation to be there and listen to the views of those who, day by day, had to carry out the practical administration of the Poor Law in this country. He had also been interested to have been present to hear from Mr Affleck, of Gateshead, a faithful handling of the Local Government Board. He had taken a careful note of what that gentleman had said. If nothing more than this happened, Mr Affleck had a full assurance that he sent the Parliamentary Secretary of the Local Government Board back to Charles Street in a completely chastened frame of mind. (Hear, hear.) He was glad to have opportunity to say a word or two under the Presidency of the Right Hon. Mr Walter Long. Mr Long was associated with the Local Government Board for many years, both as Parliamentary Secretary and as President of the Board, and in both capacities, he could say with the utmost sincerity, that Mr Long had greatly distinguished himself—(applause)—for the industry and the sympathy, the sound judgment and the administrative capacity which he brought to his great duties. His (the speaker's) presence with him at the Conference was an earnest of the desire in the House of Commons—Sir William Chance's dreadful House of Commons—to treat the great questions of the health of the people and of sanitation, and of the ministrations to the aged and infirm, and, indeed, the supervision of all the work of the great Local Authorities together as a national, and in no sense as a party, problem. (Applause.) That determination was entirely shared by his right honourable friend, the President of the Board under whom he had the honour at the present time to serve. Sir William Chance gave one or two very striking figures. He told them that the gross expenditure on poor relief had reached fourteen and a half millions. That, indeed, was a large sum, the proper dispensation of which obviously called for the greatest care and discretion on the part of the members of Local Authorities, and on the part of the Local Government Board. He also said whereas in 1880 the gross Poor Law expenditure per head was 6s. 3½d., by 1905 it had reached 8s. 5½d., and passing from that Sir William Chance went on with some animadversions upon what he described as the "Socialistic spirit," with some comment on

"pauper palaces." It would be manifestly improper for one so new to office as himself to venture upon any comment of a controversial character. But he would assure Sir William Chance at once that he was afraid he fell under the censure of those who did not mind admitting that they have rather a warm heart ; at the same time he hoped he combined that with a cool head, and it seemed to him a warm heart in combination with a cool head was a most admirable combination for purposes of Poor Law Administration. (Applause.) If he did venture upon controversy at all he could not help going the length of saying—whether it was out of the warm heart or the cool head—that he did not think that anything in the nature of lack of sympathy or anything deterrent should be associated with their ministrations for the aged and the infirm and those who had fallen into senile decay. He (the speaker) entirely associated himself—practically in its entirety—with the most admirable speech which fell from Dr Milson Rhodes. He associated himself, too, with what Sir William Chance said in the concluding portion of his speech, particularly with regard to old age pensions. (Applause.) He entirely agreed with Sir William Chance that, whereas there might be placed at their disposal some of the money spent on outdoor relief, it was obvious they would still require asylums for the poor sick and infirm who had no possible means of taking care of themselves and no relatives to use immediate care, and no suitable places. Poor Law administration for the aged and infirm poor would still continue despite any endeavours to establish any universal system of old age pensions. Sir William Chance concluded with five homely precepts which were so admirable that the Conference would forgive him rehearsing them, and associate himself with them. These were the precepts which should govern the election of Guardians of capability—who should take up the work for the interest of the poor alone, without any regard to their personal interest ; the appointment of officers solely on their merits and not by favouritism and jobbery ; a strict administration of relief without fear or favour ; absolute integrity and honesty in questions of contracts and tenders ; and close co-operation with all charitable agencies in the matter of relief. He at once associated himself with those admirable principles. Finally, the Local Government Board would have placed in its hands at no distant date the most important Report of the Poor Law Commission. That would lay a very great obligation upon the Board, its President, its Parliamentary Secretary, and its permanent officials, and they would have to bend their industries to that Report to the utmost extent and to the great problems it would present to them. He could assure them in examining those great matters in the Report, which might be followed by great changes in the Poor Law administration in this country, they would have due regard on the one hand to the proper and economic expenditure of public money, and, on the other hand, due regard to the needs of those who, from ill-health or misfortune, or economic changes, or through senile decay, demand

the ministrations of the community as a whole. He thanked them very much for having listened to him so long and wished them God-speed in all their labours. (Loud applause.)

The PRESIDENT announced that two resolutions had been handed in. The first by Mr J. Wood (Bishop's Stortford): "That this Conference is of opinion that the relief of the poor ought to come from the national taxes and not from the local poor rate fund." (Cries of No, no.) The second, by Rev. P. S. G. Propert (Fulham), was: "That the entire system upon which subventions in aid of Poor Law expenditure, both Imperial and County, are based should be revised, and take the form of block grants distributed in proportion to the needs of each locality, and be made conditional on the Local Government Board issuing certificates that the provisions of the law had been carried into effect, the Orders of the Board applicable to the district observed, and the Union efficiently and economically administered." The Conference would desire him to express to Dr Macnamara their warm thanks for his presence and for the sympathetic and extremely able speech he had delivered, which convinced them, if they needed convincing, which none of them did, that he would bring to his onerous duties the warm heart and cool head of which they had heard, and a sincere desire to work with them in the difficult labours with which they were connected. (Loud applause.)

Mr JOHN J. ADAMS (Leighton Buzzard) said the great question to be considered was why have the rates gone up? They had not far to seek for the reason. There was a tendency during the last few years for all officials—not Poor Law officials only, but all Government officials—anybody who could get into Government employment—to be pensioned, many of them in the prime of life. There was another thing. It was a libel on the Poor Law for the rates to be collected in the name of the poor rate. Let the rates be collected for what they are.

Rev. A. G. PRICHARD (West Ham), who was received with applause, said he quite appreciated the curiosity of the Conference to see a West Ham Guardian. (Laughter.) He desired to confine his remarks to the paper of Colonel Clark, because the question of contracts was one of the most important questions. Those on the West Ham Board of Guardians who had been having a strong and stern fight for public purity had been greatly helped by the courageous conduct of the Local Government Board during recent months. There were two or three considerations which it is important to remember, and if they understood that the West Ham Union dealt with a population of three-quarters of a million people, they would agree that one or two remarks might not be out of place. Although the members of the West Ham Board of Guardians numbered forty, it was not right that they should be called the forty thieves. (Loud laughter.) One reform that they had been able recently to bring about was the passage of a resolution that no relatives of Guardians should be allowed to hold a contract. (Applause.) In the second place—the Conference might agree

or disagree with him—but he was perfectly certain that the policy of confining contracts to those who resided within the area of the Union was fundamentally false. (Hear, hear.) It opened the door to difficulties, and it might open the door to corruption. It was the worst form of Protection, and he would say at once emphatically that in some cases it was better not to have a local contractor. Publicity was most important, and they had found it most desirable to so arrange matters that when the tenders were opened the representatives of the press were present and also representatives of the public. (Applause.) On the last occasion they arranged a special day to consider the tenders, and there was a large attendance both of the press and of the public, and the results were very desirable. Then in the next place they initiated the policy of having a complete and tabulated list of all the tenders, and passed a general resolution that, leaving out relatives and leaving out contractors who had proved themselves eminently undesirable, they accepted the lowest line of every tender. (Applause.) By that means they had this year saved the ratepayers literally thousands of pounds. If they were to secure honesty of administration they must not allow a contractor to withdraw. (Hear, hear.) It was surprising the mistakes some contractors made. Contractors used to contracting put in a certain price, and afterwards they said they put in the price for one article where they were asked the price of a dozen. There were remarkable differences in their prices. One contractor said he would supply a certain article for 6d., and another contractor for 10s. 3d. Another contractor said he would supply certain articles for £20, another the same for £94. 10s. In another case a contractor said his price was 12s. 6d., but one of his opponents said his price would be £8. 5s. But if all Boards of Guardians once definitely established the principle that no contractor should withdraw, then all contractors would get to understand that Guardians intended to deal honestly and straightly. Then a happier day would dawn for West Ham and the whole of the country. (Loud applause.)

Mr BEYNON (Newbury) was not quite in agreement with the last speaker, believing that if they admitted the press and public at contract time they might just as well admit the policeman. (Laughter.) But he did agree with Mr Affleck, that Guardians were too much tied by the Local Government Board. For instance, they might have an inefficient Workhouse master, and yet not be able to change him for years. He thought the question of whether the rates went up or down depended largely upon the house committees.

Mr F. FIELDER (Lambeth) attributed the increase in Poor Law expenditure, first to the increase in officials, and secondly to the dietary. The increased cost of the dietary in Lambeth had been 1s. per head of the inmates. The dietary which existed prior to the present one was quite good enough for old people. The cost of meat supplied to a family of five in the Workhouse meant a cost of from 8s. to 10s., which was a great deal more than a working man

outside would be able to spend each week on meat. Under these circumstances there was temptation for a man to ask himself why he should trouble to work, seeing that he would have good food, good clothes, and a comfortable bed, and his children would be well educated and set up in life, if he came under the Poor Law. So long as these conditions existed, so long would there be an increase in Poor Law administration. Mr Fielder then explained the Lambeth method of selecting the tea tender.

Mr J. H. STEVENS (Swansea) justified the increase in the poor rate by a comparison with the improved condition of things at Swansea with what obtained ten years ago.

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT (Fulham), in proposing his motion set out above, said that the majority of the speeches and criticisms had been destructive rather than constructive. He brought forward his motion with some confidence, because he was convinced that the present arrangements in regard to subventions were unsatisfactory. He thought that if that Conference spoke in favour of a change there would be a weight in the resolution. The majority of proposals affecting Poor Law finance took the form of recommending an extension of the Metropolitan Common Poor Fund. But he believed that would be bad, because the fund was a paying-out fund. The result was there was a constant competition among London Boards of Guardians to throw expenditure upon that fund, with the ultimate result that expenditure increased. To take the Asylums Board, in ten years the increase of expenditure on salaries alone was 3 per cent. The Local Government Board had not checked the expenditure of that authority, although in cases of Boards of Guardians the Whitehall authority had at times been almost harsh. There was an increase of at least £100,000 a year on lunacy from 1889 to 1902 in London. It was quite clear the present system tended to extravagance, and the business-like way to deal with the trouble was to revise the system. His suggestion would encourage parishes to administer well and strictly, and not those parishes which were administering at the expense of the well-administered parishes. His resolution was in accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Local Taxation, which had conducted a very careful inquiry into the whole subject. His proposal would not alter existing arrangements or be revolutionary in abolishing Boards of Guardians, but would encourage wise and careful administration.

Rev. J. F. DARRELL (Hoxne) thanked Sir Wm. Chance for his able paper, which was an example of what a Conference paper should be. He agreed that everything should be done for the aged and the infirm, but he had to complain about the action of the Local Government Board, which did not take into consideration local circumstances sufficiently. He cited a local case, and contended that the work of the Guardians was seriously hampered by the Local Government Board.

Mr J. L. HARRISON (Leicester) urged that the Conference should

THE NURSING OF THE OUTDOOR POOR AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE MIDWIVES ACT IN RURAL DISTRICTS.

BY MRS CHARLES HOBHOUSE,

*Ex-Guardian, Chippenham Union; Hon. Secretary of the Wiltshire County
Nursing Association.*

THE question of District Nursing, its Necessity, History, and Development, was fully dealt with in a paper read by Miss Amy Hughes at the South-Eastern Poor Law Conference on 30th November 1906. It will be quite unnecessary for me, therefore, to deal with the same question from a similar standpoint. It may be taken, then, for granted that all are of the opinion the nursing of patients in their own homes is both humane from the aspect of the patient, educational for their families and surroundings, and also economical, as being not only often preventive of disease, but the quickest method of recovery. The question, then, at present before us is to deal with the matter from the point of view of the Guardians, with relation to the nursing of their outdoor poor; how they can obtain these nursing advantages which are so obvious to us all; what is the most suitable kind of nurse for the work; and what is the probable expense involved?

In towns where there is a large and congested population, with a Workhouse infirmary upon a considerable scale, it is a comparatively simple matter. The average number of cases amongst the outdoor poor would be sufficiently great, and the distance to be covered by the nurses sufficiently small, to make it possible for the Guardians either to maintain a special nurse for district work only (as has been done in several instances, under the Local Government Board Order of 27th January 1892), or to depute one

or more nurses of their own infirmary staff for employment, when required, upon district work.

In rural districts the problem is far more difficult, and in reality far more important. Thus, the distance from medical relief and from hospital accommodation renders skilled nursing even more essential than in towns. On the other hand, the heavy demand during certain periods of the year upon the services of a nurse, followed by an interval of possibly months during which no case would require attention, together with the difficulty and expense of locomotion, and of providing sleeping accommodation for the nurse, renders it almost impossible and useless for Guardians to maintain one special nurse for their outdoor poor within a rural Union.

The question then arises, is there any system or organisation which renders it possible to provide nurses adequate to meet the constantly varying demands of the relieving officers in this respect, a demand which has been, and will be, steadily increasing?

There is no doubt but that the simplest and cheapest method of meeting this demand is for Guardians to subscribe to, and thus support, any nursing associations which may exist in their Union. The value of these associations is now so fully recognised that there are comparatively few districts which have not one or more of these voluntary agencies working in their midst, and that their services to the outdoor poor are appreciated by Boards of Guardians is clearly demonstrated by that support afforded to them in many parts of the country.

For example, in the county of Wiltshire, so recently as June 1900, only two Boards of Guardians subscribed to, and derived any benefit from, nursing associations and institutions, whereas at the present time no less than ten out of the sixteen Unions in the county are employing for their out-paupers nurses

maintained by voluntary associations. The arrangements made by these subscribing Boards differ considerably, as they are drawn up, in the majority of cases, to fall in with the rules, and scale of fees, charged to patients by the local nursing associations. Where the nurse employed is a district visiting nurse, the subscription usually covers all cases undertaken for, and demanded by, the relieving officers within the area worked by the nurse—the amounts given varying from 10s. in very small parishes, up to £7. 10s. in those of larger population. In one Union only is there no inclusive subscription paid, but a fee of 2d. a visit guaranteed by the Board to all out-pauper cases nurses. This latter system cannot be considered satisfactory, as it shows too great a tendency to take advantage of the generosity of voluntary associations without assuming a due proportion of the responsibility of maintenance. In places where cottage resident nurses are employed, worked upon the lines of a benefit club, the subscription given by Boards of Guardians works out on an average at £1 per thousand of the population included. For this the Nursing Association undertakes to supply a nurse whenever required by the relieving officer within the area of its association, on payment of 2s. a week fee. When the usual additional grant of 2s. 6d. a week for extra food is required by the nurse, this is in some instances paid by the association, and in others by the Board. These fees to visiting and resident nurses do not include midwifery, but relate to general nursing only—neither do the subscriptions always include the nursing for the whole area of the Union. The stock fallacy that the rates collected from the whole Union cannot be employed for one part of it for skilled nursing, whereas they can be and always are employed, as necessity arises, by the relieving officers for unskilled nursing, is wisely repudiated as absurd by the majority of the Boards of Guardians in Wilt-

shire. They have taken the broader view and have shown themselves willing to make what provision they can, where they can, for the care of their outdoor poor, knowing full well the difficulty that exists in many parts of the country in obtaining even an untrained neighbour who is able and willing to undertake the nursing of any case of emergency. Over and above the assistance obtained from local nursing associations, in two instances subscriptions are given to cottage hospitals and nursing institutions as a retaining fee for the services of a nurse when required by the Board in their Union.

It may be that Wiltshire is especially fortunate in having in every Union area one or more voluntary nursing associations. It would be well, therefore, to consider the possibility of procuring these advantages in those Unions where none are so far in existence. In the thirty-nine English counties, exclusive of Middlesex, twenty-three have county nursing associations formed for the express purpose of providing nurses of all grades for the sick poor. A great number of these have a staff of what are known as "emergency nurses," who are kept solely for the purpose of being sent to individual districts or cases as necessity arises. These districts are affiliated to the county association in order to obtain a claim upon the services of the nurses at a reduced fee. There is but little doubt that the executive committees of the county nursing associations would welcome proposals by Boards of Guardians for arrangements such as these for their Unions, and would do all in their power to make it advantageous to both parties concerned.

Failing any assistance from local or county nursing associations, an amalgamation of Boards of Guardians within a given area, such as a county, might well take place for the training and maintenance of nurses suitable for their needs. In so doing it would be well to bear in mind that a highly-trained, three years'

certificated hospital nurse is not, as a rule, the most suitable person for cottage rural work. By the Local Government Board Order of January 1892, it is essential that nurses employed by Guardians in district work should have had at least twelve months' training at a recognised training school. This class of nurse is known in the nursing world either as the "Village nurse" of the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute, or as the "Cottage Benefit Nurse" working on the Holt Ockley lines, and either one or the other are, in the majority of cases, the most suitable from every point of view for cottage work. The cost of training and maintenance of a nurse of this kind, holding the C.M.B. certificate and under the usual agreement of three to four years' service, is from £30 to £60 a year. Although the majority of the nursing staff should consist of this type of nurse as being the most useful in view of the cases which commonly arise, unquestionably the ideal system of all rural nursing is to have every grade of nurse available, fully competent to undertake all kinds of cases. This must entail co-operation with all nursing institutions and organisations within possible reach of the nursing area for the interchange of nurses and the regulation of supply and demand.

In dealing with all questions relating to the nursing of the outdoor poor, the urgency of proper organisation to meet their requirements is made tenfold greater by the Midwives Act of 1902. This Act has only partially come into force, and untrained, unregistered women may continue, up to 1910, their practice as midwives, so long as they do not describe or advertise themselves as such. Owing to the rather ambiguous wording of the Act, numbers of women have already entirely given up their practice, and in many parts of the country Guardians are therefore confronted with constant demands for midwifery orders by women who could well afford to pay small sums in order to secure

the services of a midwife, but who cannot, in the absence of any midwife, pay the full doctor's fee, amounting usually to a guinea, and in some districts from two to three guineas. There is no question but that in rural districts this demand for midwifery orders will enormously increase in and after 1910, and unless some steps are forthwith taken by public bodies or voluntary effort to provide a sufficient supply of competent midwives the Guardians will be called upon to pay extremely heavily for the services of medical men to meet the requirements of the Act. Fortunately a good deal has been done already in this direction. County councils are offering scholarships in midwifery, and an immense impetus has been given by the Act to all voluntary nursing associations. Notwithstanding this there still remains a vast amount to do, and a very short time in which to do it.

At the present moment no public body is responsible for the upkeep or augmentation of the number of nurses holding the C.M.B. certificate. It is true that county councils can grant scholarships in midwifery through their general education committee, but the money is seldom forthcoming for more than two, or at most four, such scholarships yearly. This is all the financial assistance that can be legally given by county councils, and is a measure of the prospective shortage we shall inevitably experience. On the other hand, they can and do provide for the supervision and inspection of existing midwives, and have full powers of suspension for malpractice or in the imposition of fines made compulsory under the Act. They are, therefore, in reality simply and solely a supervising authority for the purpose of keeping up an efficient *standard* of midwifery, but without direct powers even to maintain, let alone increase, the number of midwives within their jurisdiction, however inadequate the supply may be for the present population. This deficiency will become serious as the population increases.

A question was asked in the House of Commons on 12th November 1906 as to whether the Government would introduce a Bill to enable county councils to contribute, either out of the general county funds or out of funds set apart for the purpose of higher education, towards the training of midwives to meet the "urgent necessity" existing in many counties for such training. The answer, however, given by the President of the Local Government Board affords very little hope of help from Parliament, and we must turn to other quarters for assistance in anticipating the grave situation with which we shall be faced in a few years time. This situation is the shortage in the supply of midwives which will inevitably arise in 1910 owing to the causes set out above.

Where no midwife is obtainable, the sole public bodies who are at present financially responsible for the provision of medical assistance are the Boards of Guardians. The cost of a *medical* order for midwifery is usually *at least* 10s. 6d., whereas if such an order can be given to a certificated midwife the fee in most nursing associations is 5s. to 7s. 6d. A considerable saving, therefore, may be made in the year by the employment of midwives rather than doctors.

It is essential, therefore, that all Guardians should look at this question seriously, and so prepare for that future difficulty in respect of midwives which I have pointed out, in order that they may not find themselves involved in considerably increased expenditure following on the substitution of doctors for midwives, and the consequent higher payment to the former.

Economy alone, therefore, demands that every effort should be made during the remaining interval of three years to provide for the care of the outdoor poor in maternity nursing, as well as in general sick nursing, upon the lines already suggested, viz.:—

(1.) By subscribing to existing District nursing associations in order to secure a claim upon their staff ;

(2.) By endeavouring to co-operate with County nursing associations for the same purpose ; or

(3.) By combination with neighbouring Boards of Guardians in appointing a staff of every grade of nurse to meet the individual demands where required.

In dealing with this last proposal it must be borne in mind that the Local Government Board Order which permits and encourages Boards of Guardians to appoint district nurses, forbids such nurses undertaking the duties of a midwife upon the score of danger of infection, &c. In 1892 this was a wise and sound precaution, but conditions have changed since then. The Central Midwives' Board have now laid down minute instructions for the prevention of infection, and under the Midwives Act inspection and supervision must be so constant and so strict that the reason for this limitation has absolutely disappeared. It is to be hoped, then, that the Local Government Board may see its way to rescinding this obsolete precaution as soon as possible, which might otherwise become a very grave deterrent in rural districts to the provision of any sort of nursing whatsoever. For, unless a large supply of every grade of nurse is available, it would be well, under present conditions, for all nurses appointed by Boards of Guardians for their outdoor poor to hold the C.M.B. certificate.

Into this particular branch of maternity nursing we ought, one and all, to throw the whole of our energies and influence. We must do our utmost to secure an increase in the number of women competent to act as midwives. We must obtain the co-operation of the Central Midwives' Board towards the recognition of a larger number of Training Schools. We must press for more centres for examination, and for greater elasticity with regard to the regulations for examination. If a shorter interval could be allowed between the receipt of candidates' papers and date of examination, and if the same facilities regarding the written exami-

nation could be granted, as were formerly given by the London Obstetrical Society, a good deal of the difficulty of training might be obviated. Finally, we should urge for some legislation towards giving financial powers in procuring an adequate supply of midwives.

In doing all this let it not be forgotten that in providing skilled attention to the mothers of this country, we are providing a preventive of disease and misery both to them and to their newly born infants.

At the passing of the Midwives Act the statistics laid before Parliament were somewhat startling. They included a yearly death roll of four thousand mothers—due, humanly speaking, entirely to mismanagement and neglect at the time of their confinements. They represented one out of every seven of the total number of women in our hospitals as being there from the same cause.

Again, the enormously high rate of infant mortality can be traced to a great extent to the want of proper attention at birth. For a similar reason the blind asylums and homes for cripples are largely filled by those who might well have been saved a life of suffering to themselves, besides a life of dependence upon others.

It is surely, therefore, no exaggeration to say that this question is one of grave moment, and should occupy the attention of all thinking men and women in this country—more particularly members of Boards of Guardians, touching them as it does both upon the side of finance as well as upon the side of humanity.

DISCUSSION.

Dr J. M. RHODES observed that none would accuse him of desiring incompetently-trained midwives to be licensed, but the question raised by Mrs Hobhouse was one that intimately concerned Boards of Guardians. At present the Central Midwives' Board did not contain a single representative of the Poor Law authorities.

("Shame.") Yet in the Poor Law hospitals of London alone there were more beds than in all the voluntary hospitals in England and Wales put together. This proved that the Poor Law hospitals were really the State hospitals. That being so, he thought those institutions should have some voice in saying which institutions should train midwives and which should not. Were the voluntary hospitals better arranged or administered than the Poor Law hospitals? Let them take Birmingham, King's Norton, Nottingham, or Chorlton, and they would find no better lying-in wards anywhere than there are in those places. It was the fact that while small voluntary institutions could train midwives, first-class hospitals, Union hospitals, were unrecognised in this work. It was a disgrace to the Midwives' Board that this state of things should be allowed to continue. He knew of one London hospital which had not had a single maternity death out of 120 cases per annum since it started, and the institution was not licensed to train the nurses. He contended that the nurses trained in a good Poor Law hospital were quite as competent as a nurse trained in some pettifogging voluntary hospital. (Laughter.) He urged they should call upon the Local Government Board to alter the present situation, because the regulations of the Central Midwives' Board prevented thoroughly competent women qualifying for the post of midwives. He moved—"That in the opinion of this Conference the Local Government Board should at once take steps to secure the licensing of competent Union hospitals to train midwives, so as to meet the demand which at present exists for trained midwives, all midwives to pass the same examination."

Miss KERRISON (West Ham) seconded, and said that Guardians had a great opportunity for producing trained midwives in their infirmaries and lying-in wards. It was a great pity, seeing the demand was so great, that they were not allowed to produce them. The lying-in wards of most Workhouses were admirably managed, and received the personal attention and interest of the members of the Board. Skilled women were always placed in charge of them, and it was the duty of Boards of Guardians to press for the change indicated in the motion, in order that the demand which would be forthcoming in the future could be adequately supplied.

Mrs PRATT (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) expressed regret that Mrs Hobhouse should have made the observation that highly-trained certificated nurses are not the most suitable persons for nursing in rural districts. The Queen's nurses were proof to the contrary, and the Queen's nurses had three years' hospital training at least. She would like to know if any of those nurses had ever been known to fail in their duty, either in respect to tact or efficiency. In her opinion no more suitable nurses could be found for this work.

In answer to a Delegate,

The PRESIDENT said that the number of cases required before an institution could be certified was 75.

The resolution was carried unanimously.

On the motion of the PRESIDENT, a vote of thanks was accorded to Mrs Hobhouse for her admirable paper.

Dr RHODES moved a cordial vote of thanks to the Right Hon. W. H. Long for his presidential services. The Conference owed the President a debt of gratitude for his admirable address, which was one of the best ever given at that annual Conference. They also owed their hearty thanks to Mr Long for his courteous and tactful conduct of the two days' proceedings. (Applause.)

Mr G. CRAIGHILL seconded, and the motion was carried with prolonged acclamation.

The Right Hon. W. H. LONG, M.P., in acknowledgment, thanked the Conference for the way in which it had received him. It had been the greatest possible gratification for him to preside at the Conference, and he highly appreciated the honour done him by the invitation. To get through the heavy labours of such a Conference as theirs in anything like reasonable time rules of debate had to be properly enforced, and he was grateful to the Delegates for the warm support accorded to him, as Chairman, which had made his task not only pleasant but light. He would always remember with pride and gratification the fact that he had presided at the Conference, and more than appreciated their expression of satisfaction at his efforts to do his duty. (Applause.)

A vote of thanks to the Corporation of the City of London for the use of the Guildhall terminated the Conference.

RESOLUTIONS PASSED AT CONFERENCES DURING THE YEAR 1906-07.

COST OF MAINTAINING FEEBLE-MINDED.

"That in the opinion of this Conference it is desirable that the grant of 4s. per head now payable in respect of pauper lunatics be extended, and be made payable in respect of the maintenance of feeble-minded persons in institutions or other places where such class of paupers are maintained."

North Wales District (p. 225).

INFANT LIFE PROTECTION ACT.

"That this Conference is of opinion that the Infant Life Protection Act should be extended to all cases where one child is taken, as well as to those where two or more are taken, and that the work of inspection should be carried out by lady inspectors appointed for the purpose."

North-Western District (p. 371).

MENTALLY DEFECTIVE MOTHERS.

"That this Conference is strongly of opinion that those unmarried mothers who are so mentally defective as to be a danger to themselves and to the community should be placed under permanent custodial care; and urges the Royal Commission on the Care of the Feeble-minded to recommend accordingly."

"That much good would result if there were established a sufficient number of voluntary homes where unmarried mothers suitable for special treatment could be sent, with their own consent, by Boards of Guardians, at a weekly cost approximating to the maintenance in Workhouses."

West Midland District (p. 26).

"That in view of the large number of feeble-minded single females who are admitted into the maternity wards of Workhouses, and whom the medical officer is unable to certify as lunatics, this Conference respectfully urges the Local Government Board to seek Parliamentary powers with a view to enabling Guardians to detain this class of persons at the Workhouse or any other suitable institution provided for the purpose, and so prevent such persons returning to their former environment and becoming again a burden upon the rates."

North Wales District (p. 229).

RETIREMENT OF L.G.B. INSPECTORS.

"Expressions of appreciation of the long and valuable services rendered by—

MR BIRCHAM (*South Wales District*, p. 75);

MR JENNER-FUST (*Northern District*, p. 189, and *North-Western District*, p. 272)."

RETIREMENT OF DISTRICT HON. SEC.

Thanks to Mr J. E. HELMSLEY (Clerk of the North Brierley Board) for his services as Hon. Sec. of the Yorkshire Conference for eight years. *Yorkshire District* (p. 333).

RETRENCHMENT AND REFORM.

"That it is the opinion of this Conference that the Standing Committee should further discuss the question dealt with in the papers read on the increasing burden of the ratepayers in connection with Poor Law administration, with a view to approaching Boards of Guardians and the Local Government Board on the necessary reforms."

South-Western District (p. 432).

VAGRANCY.

"That this Conference notes with much satisfaction the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, and urges the Government to embody the recommendations in a Bill and pass the same into law at an early date."

West Midland District (p. 58).

"That this Conference, whilst approving of the establishment of Labour Colonies for the treatment of habitual vagrants, disagrees with the recommendation of the Committee that the police authority be substituted for the Poor Law authority or the body responsible for the local relief of vagrants and the management of casual wards."

Northern District (p. 179).

"That, whilst approving generally of the Departmental Committee's Report, this Conference disagrees with the proposal that the police authority should be substituted for the Poor Law authority; but it is of opinion that an improved and more uniform system of dealing with vagrants, either by combination of Unions or otherwise, should be adopted without loss of time."

North-Western District (pp. 305-310).

"That this Conference approves of the recommendations of the Departmental Committee on vagrancy, but considers that in respect of labour colonies they ought to be exclusively under State control."

South-Western District (p. 469).

"That in the opinion of this Conference, Guardians, as the only authority entrusted with the duty of relief of destitution, should continue to administer relief to the casual poor ; but that uniformity of administration should be secured by combination of Unions, and that this reform should be adopted without delay. The Conference also desires to express the opinion that expenditure connected with vagrant relief should be made a national charge. The Conference further desires to call the attention of the Government to the very valuable information contained in the Report of the Departmental Committee on Vagrancy, and to urge that immediate steps shall be taken to deal with this most pressing question."

Central Conference (p. 723).

SUBJECTS SUGGESTED FOR DISCUSSION AT POOR LAW CONFERENCES DURING THE YEAR 1907-8.

The Committee suggest the following Subjects for Discussion at the District Poor Law Conferences during the year :—

1. How far co-operation can be secured between the Poor Law and provident medical institutions and societies.
2. Combination of Unions for the treatment of vagrants.
3. Administration of outdoor relief.
4. The relation of legal relief to voluntary charity.
5. The present system of grants-in-aid for Poor Law purposes, and the necessity for its revision.
6. The best system of tenders and contracts.
7. The treatment of tuberculosis under the Poor Law.
8. Women as relieving officers.
9. Powers of Workhouse and district medical officers.
10. The Case-Paper System.
11. Causes of pauperism.
12. Indoor administration and the employment of inmates.

APPENDIX.

PRESENTATION TO THE "EXMOUTH."

The members of the 1906 Conference paid a visit to the new "Exmouth" training-ship. (See special description of the event in the Official Report of the Central Conference, 1906, p. 706.) They marked their appreciation of the work done by Captain Colmore, R.N., and his able staff by subscribing the sum of £19, which was expended on the purchase of a challenge shield for competition between the boys.

It is worthy of note that this is the second trophy for which the boys of the "Exmouth" are indebted to the Poor Law Guardians of the country, as the delegates to the Central Conference in 1904 visited the old "Exmouth," and commemorated the event by presenting a silver cup.

The shield was accompanied by the following letter from Dr Rhodes (Chairman), and Sir William Chance, Bart. (Hon. Secretary), of the Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences, and the President of the 1906 Conference, Mr Geoffrey Drage, Chairman of the "Exmouth" Committee of the M.A.B. :—

DEAR CAPTAIN COLMORE,—On behalf of the members of the Central Poor Law Conference, 1906, we have much pleasure in presenting a silver challenge shield, which was subscribed for by them in commemoration of their pleasant and instructive visit to the new "Exmouth" for the best division at marksmanship.—We are, yours truly,

(Sig.) GEOFFREY DRAGE, *President of the Conference.*

J. MILSON RHODES, *Chairman of the Central Committee.*

W. CHANCE, *Hon. Secretary of the Central Committee.*

To Captain Colmore, R.N., Capt. Supt., "Exmouth."

The following letter of acknowledgment was sent by the Metropolitan Asylums Board :—

SIR,—I am desired by the Committee of Management of the training-ship "Exmouth" to express their sincere thanks for the handsome shield presented to the ship by members of the Central Poor Law Conference, 1906, to be awarded to the best division in marksmanship. The Committee feel that the annual competition for the shield will excite the greatest interest among the boys in a most important part of their training, and must have the beneficial effect of increasing the general efficiency in marksmanship of all the boys aboard.

I am to add that the trophy is highly valued by the boys themselves.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

(Sig.) T. DUNCOMBE MANN, *Clerk to the Board.*

To W. G. Lewis, Esq., Secretary, Central Committee
of Poor Law Conferences.

Central Committee of Poor Law Conferences.

This Committee consists of three representatives being Guardians or Clerks to Guardians, or Hon. Secretaries of District Conferences, annually elected by each of the District Poor Law Conferences in England and Wales, and of certain additional members co-opted by the elected members, but not to exceed in number more than one-third of the number of elected representatives.

The co-opted members are appointed for two years, one-half of them to retire by rotation in each year, but to be eligible for re-election.

The following are the Committee and its Officers:—

Chairman—Dr J. MILSON RHODES, Ivy Lodge, Didsbury, Lancs.

Hon. Treasurer—Mr W. VALLANCE, 55 Tressillian Road, St John's, S.E.

Hon. Secretary—Sir WILLIAM CHANCE, Bart., Orchards, near Godalming.

Secretary—Mr W. G. LEWIS, Barrister-at-Law, 8 Wells Street, Gray's Inn Road, W.C.

ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES.

1. Metropolitan and (2.) South-Eastern Districts—

Miss BRODIE-HALL, Merlin, Eastbourne.

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT, 247 Lillie Road, Fulham, S.W.

Mr H. G. WILLINK, Hillfields, Burghfield, Reading.

3. South Midland District—

Mr E. G. COLE, 82 Pellatt Grove, Wood Green, N.

Sir EDMUND VERNEY, Bart., Claydon House, Winslow, Bucks.

Col. GERARD CLARK, 8 Grange Park, Ealing, W.

4. Eastern District—

Rev. Dr HAMILTON ASHWIN, The Lecture House, Dedham, Essex.

Rev. J. F. DARRELL, Monk Soham Rectory, Framlingham, Suffolk.

Mr H. STONE, Guardians' Office, Norwich.

5. South-Western District—

Mr A. G. FERRERS HOWELL, Southlands, Heavitree, Exeter

Sir C. THOMAS DYKE ACLAND, Bart., Killerton, Exeter.

Mrs FULLER, Neston Park, Corsham, Wilts.

6. West Midland District—

Mr F. W. B. CRIPPS, Coxwell House, Cirencester.

Mr W. H. PRITCHARD, Wolverhampton.

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER, Hardwicke Court, Gloucester.

7. North Midland District—

Mr THOMAS PALMER, 61 Alfreton Road, Nottingham.

Mrs PRATT, The Elms, Ashby-de-la-Zouch.

8. North-Western District—

Mr H. J. HAGGER, Parish Offices, Liverpool.

Rev. T. BRIDGE, Macclesfield.

Dr J. MILSON RHODES, Ivy Lodge, Didsbury, Lancs.

9. Yorkshire District—

Mr F. H. BENTHAM, Grantham Mount, Laisteridge Lane, Bradford.

Miss E. SIDDON, Honley, Huddersfield.

Mr S. J. GOWER, 64 Prince's Avenue, Hull.

10. Northern District—

Mr GEORGE CRAIGHILL, Guardians' Offices, Gateshead.
Hon. Mrs CROPPER, Ellergreen, Kendal.
Mr C. T. STABLEFORTH, Newcastle-on-Tyne.

11. South Wales District—

Mr F. J. BRAVAN, 18 Conway Road, Canton, Cardiff.
Mr J. W. JOHNSTON, Lonlas, Llansamlet, near Swansea.
Mr S. H. COWPER-COLES, Penmyarth, near Crickhowel.

12. North Wales District—

Mrs BATTERS, Tan y lan, Holywell.
Mr SIMON JONES, Milton Villa, Wrexham.
Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS, The Grove, Holywell.

CO-OPTATED MEMBERS.

Sir WILLIAM BOUSFIELD, 20 Hyde Park Gate, S.W.
Miss M. CLIFFORD, 152 Redland Road, Bristol.
Rt. Hon. Sir J. T. HIBBERT, K.C.B., Hampfield, Grange-over-Sands.
Mr H. JENNER-FUST, Kyneton, Thornbury S.O., Glos.
Mr R. A. LEACH, Union Offices, Rochdale.
Miss SOPHIA LONSDALE, The Close, Lichfield.
Mr H. J. MANTON, Westfield Road, Birmingham.
Mr DUNCAN MILLIGAN, 21 Spencer Road, New Wandsworth, S.W.
Hon. F. STRUTT, Milford House, Derby.
Mr W. VALLANCE, 55 Tressillian Road, St John's, S.E.
Mr A. F. VULLIAMY, Great Colman Street, Ipswich.

DISTRICT COMMITTEES.

1. Metropolitan (31 Unions), and (2.) South-Eastern (96 Unions).

(South-Eastern Conference first met, 1870.)
(Metropolitan " " 1875.)

Mr EDMOND H. WODEHOUSE, C.B., Plomer Hill, High Wycombe, *President*.
Sir WILLIAM BOUSFIELD, 20 Hyde Park Gate, S.W.,
Mr JAMES BROWN, 43 Lexham Gardens, S.W., } *Vice-*
Sir W. CHANCE, Bart., Orchards, near Godalming, } *Presidents.*
Mr EDMOND FOSTER, Avondale, Guildford, *Hon. Secretary.*

Berks.....Rev. F. C. CLUTTERBUCK, Culham Vicarage, Abingdon.
Mr J. P. KING, North Stoke, Wallingford.
Mr J. TUTTLE, Reading.

Hants.....Sir RICHARD RYCROFT, Bart., Dummer House, Basing-
stoke.

Mr ALBERT SAVAGE, 19 Clarence Square, Gosport.
Mr J. SIMPSON, Portsmouth.

Kent.....Mr F. J. ALLISON, West Malling, Maidstone.
Mr F. B. COBB, Faversham.

Mr H. E. H. RICE, North Court, Dover.

Surrey.....Mr B. BRAITHWAITE, Hookfield, Epsom.

Mrs A. C. PAIN, St Catherine's, Frimley.
Mr H. A. POWELL, Piccard's Rough, Guildford.

Sussex.....Miss BRODIE-HALL, Eastbourne.

Mr F. TUPPENY, Hastings.

Mr A. WEEKES, The Mansion House, Hurstpierpoint.

Metropolis.....Mr G. HOWLETT, 193 Clapham Road, S.W.

Mrs E. MORRIS, 126 East Dulwich Road, S.E.

Rev. P. S. G. PROPERT, 247 Lillie Road, Fulham.

Co-opted Members.

Sir WILLIAM BOUSFIELD, 20 Hyde Park Gate, S.W.
Sir W. CHANCE, Bart., Orchards, near Godalming.
Miss COWIE, St Gabriel's House, London Docks, E.
Miss BAKER, 37 Brooke Street, Holborn Bars, E.C.
Rt. Hon. J. G. TALBOT, M.P., Falconhurst, Edenbridge, Kent.
Mr W. VALLANCE, 55 Tressillian Road, St John's, S.E.

3. South Midland. 64 Unions (First met, 1876).

Col. GERARD CLARK, 8 Grange Park, Ealing, W., *Hon. Secretary.*

Committee.

Bedford Mrs GRAFTON, 14 Cardington Road, Bedford.
Bucks Sir EDMUND VERNEY, Bart., Claydon House, Winslow.
Cambridge Mr A. J. PELL, Wilburton Manor, Ely.
Hertford Mr HARFORD GREEN, Stansted, Essex.
Huntingdon Rev. THOS. HODGSON, Eynesbury Vicarage, St Neots.
Middlesex Mr E. G. COLE, The Potteries, Tottenham.
Northampton Rev. Canon BURY, Harleston, Northampton.
Oxford Mrs J. A. GILLET, North Newington House, Banbury.

4. Eastern. 56 Unions (First met, 1872).

Mr A. F. VULLIAMY, Great Colman Street, Ipswich, *Hon. Secretary.*

The Committee consists of one Delegate from each Union.

5. South-Western. 80 Unions (First met, 1872).

Mr A. G. FERRERS HOWELL, Southlands, Heavitree, Exeter, *Hon. Secretary.*

Committee.

Cornwall Mrs T. R. BOLITHO, Trengwainton, Hea Moor R.S.O.,
Cornwall.
Rev. R. J. ROE, Lanteglos Rectory, Camelford.
Mr E. BEAUCHAMP-BEAUCHAMP, Trevince, Redruth.
Rev. W. E. GRAVES, 1 St Clement's Vicarage, near Truro
Dorset Mr J. WYATT, East House, Sydling, Dorchester.
Mr J. L. KITSON.
Mrs HOLFORD, Castle Hill, Buckland Newton, Dor-
chester.
Rev. F. WILLIAMS, Bettiscombe Rectory, Charmouth.
Devon Mr F. UNDERHILL, 7 Sutherland Road, Plymouth.
Mr J. C. WILLS, 68 Durnford Street, East Stonehouse.
Mr R. BREALY, The Leaze, Okehampton.
Mr J. CAMPFIELD, Alphington Road, Exeter.
Somerset Col. CLAYTON, Charlcombe Minor, Bath.
Miss F. C. JOSEPH, Holford, Bridgwater.
Mrs ATHELSTAN COODE, Portway Lodge, Wells.
Mr W. SYDNEY PRICE, Wellington, Somerset.
Wills BLANCHE, Lady PELLY, St John's Lodge, Warminster.
Mrs FULLER, Neston Park, Corsham.
Mr W. C. KEEVIL, Swallowcliffe, Salisbury.
Mr ROBERT BUTLER, Stitchcombe House, Marlborough.

6. West Midland. 82 Unions (First met, 1868).

Mr G. E. LLOYD-BAKER, Hardwicke Court, Gloucester, *Hon. Secretary.*

Committee.

Gloucester Mr F. W. B. CRIPPS, Coxwell House, Cirencester.
Hereford Mr H. RONALDS, Swayne's Hill, Hereford.
Salop Rev. T. AUDEN, Condoover, Shrewsbury.
Stafford Mr W. H. FRITCHARD, Mensfield, Wolverhampton.
Warwick Mr G. WILSON, Coventry.
Worcester Rev. G. ASTBURY, Smethwick, Birmingham.
Birmingham Mr J. R. TURNER, Rotten Park, Edgbaston.
Bristol Mr E. C. TVACK, St Peter's Hospital, Bristol.

7. North Midland. 47 Unions (First met, 1875).

DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE, K.G., *President*.

Hon. F. STRUTT, Milford House, Derby, *Hon. Secretary*.

Committee.

***Derbyshire*.....Rev. HY. R. ROLFE, St Michael's Vicarage, Derby.**

Mr J. BOWN, Somercotes Hill, Alfreton.

Mr C. BARKER, 37 Westbourne Road, Sheffield.

Mr RICHARD FINNEY, Hemington, Derby.

Mrs ELLEN A. SIMPSON, "Heather Brae," Whittaker Road, Derby.

Mr THEO. PEARSON, J.P., Abercrombie St., Chesterfield.

Mr J. BLOSSOM, 186 Southview Road, Sheffield.

Mr G. EMERSON, Wales Road, Kineton Park, Sheffield.

***Leicestershire*... Mr A. F. HOLLAND, 78 London Road, Leicester.**

Miss EVELYN CARRYER, "The Close," St John's Road, Leicester.

Mr J. SLEATH SMITH, Mount Sorrel, Loughborough.

***Lincolnshire*.....Mr G. SIMPSON, Wales Rd., Kiveton Park, Sheffield.**

Mr C. JEFFS, 364 Cleethorpe Road, Grimsby.

***Notts*.....Mr THOS. WARD, Queen's Walk, Nottingham.**

8. North-Western. 42 Unions (First met, 1875).

Right Hon. Sir J. T. HIBBERT, K.C.B., Hampfield, Grange-over-Sands, Carnforth, *President*.

Mr H. J. HAGGER, Parish Offices, Liverpool, *Hon. Secretary*.

(There is no Committee, but a preliminary Conference is held each year to settle all the arrangements for the Conference.)

9. Yorkshire. 68 Unions (First met, 1876).

Mr THOMAS SMITH, The Edge, Sheffield, *Hon. Secretary*.

The Committee consists of the Chairmen and Clerks of the following Unions:—Bradford, Bridlington, Dewsbury, Halifax, Huddersfield, Hunslet, Kingston-upon-Hull, Leeds, North Bierley, Sculcoates, Sheffield, Wakefield, York, Ecclesall Bierlow.

10. Northern. 39 Unions (First met, 1872).

Mr ROBERT AFFLECK, J.P., 26 West Street, Gateshead, *President*.

Rev. A. F. CURWEN, Harrington Rectory, Whitehaven, *Vice-President*.

Rev. Canon WALKER, Whalton Rectory, Newcastle, *Hon. Sec.*

Mr J. W. GIBSON, Guardians' Offices, Newcastle, *Treasurer*.

Committee.

***Cumberland*.. ...Mrs CHALKER, 8 George Street, Carlisle.**

Rev. A. F. CURWEN, Harrington Rectory, Whitehaven.

Miss KING, Elm Grove, Keswick.

***Durham*.....Mr E. J. J. BROWELL, Boldon House, South Shields.**

Mr GEORGE CRAIGHILL, 38 Bewick Road, Gateshead.

Mr J. C. MOOR, 28 Azalea Terrace, Sunderland.

***Northumberland*. Mr C. T. STABLEFORTH, Westgate Road, Newcastle-on-Tyne.**

Mr H. W. WALTON, Union Offices, Alnwick.

Mr J. ESKDALE, Tynemouth.

Mr G. H. HOGG, 10 Alma Place, North Shields.

***Westmorland*.....Mrs LLOYD WILSON, Westworth, Cockermouth.**

Hon. Mrs CROPPER, Ellergreen, Kendal.

11. South Wales. 33 Unions (First met, 1873).

Mr HERBERT LLOYD, Plas Cilybebyll, Pontardawe, *Chairman*.

Mr A. J. HARRIS, Queen's Chambers, Cardiff, *Hon. Secretary*.

The Committee consists of the three representatives on the Committee of the Central Conference, and the Chairmen and Clerks of all Boards of Guardians in the District, or if the Chairman cannot act, some member nominated by the Board in his stead.

12. North Wales. 20 Unions (First met, 1877).

Mr P. HARDING ROBERTS, The Grove, Holywell, *Hon. Secretary*.

The Committee consists of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of all Boards of Guardians in the District.

Part
H.T.

